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# **Family Memory and Photography in Twenty-First-Century German Writing**

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Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts by Research  
Durham University  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures  
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## Abstract

This thesis explores memory, photography, and generational change in four examples of post-war German literature, all published since the turn of the millennium.

Much of the study of World War II, the Holocaust, and National Socialism revolves around memory, particularly when we look at the impact these events and ideas had on the people involved. War records can provide us with the date of an election, or a number of lives lost, but in order to even begin to understand the impact of National Socialism on both its victims and perpetrators we must rely on testimony and memory. In the years since German reunification many examples of *Enkelliteratur* have been published by the grandchildren of members of the National Socialist perpetrator collective. These works describe and explore the reality and psychological impact of belonging to a family with a difficult past.

The importance of images and photography to memory has long been recognized, and so it is from the photographic perspective that I set out to explore the four texts this thesis is focused on, drawing on psychoanalytic and memory theories. I argue that it is not only the photographic content itself that is important, but also that its layout and presentation are vital to the reader's interpretations of the photographs and text as a whole. In particular, I explore what is left out of the texts, and the narratives that the photographs create on their own and in their interaction with the text.

In this thesis I draw on memory theory by Freud, Halbwachs, and Assmann, and photographic theory by Hirsch, among others, to show the diversity in this literary genre, and that it is still an active area in which new examples are constantly emerging.



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## Introduction

In the twenty-five years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, which prompted the subsequent [re]unification of Germany, an extensive corpus of autobiographical, biographical, and fictitious texts on the personal aspects of the National Socialist past has been published. Often written by family members of subsequent generations, they offer a wide range of perspectives: some are written on the basis of personal acquaintance with wartime relatives, while others are based on inherited memories, letters and photographs. Some condemn their relatives' behaviour, others excuse it. The grandchildren of both victims and perpetrators have published literary works, but this thesis focuses solely on German perpetrator genealogy.

These texts have been connected by their grouping into what has become known as *Erinnerungsliteratur*. Most examples of *Erinnerungsliteratur* can be identified as either *Väterliteratur* or *Familienromane*. These two terms correspond loosely to generation and perspective; *Väterliteratur* is a label applied to texts published in the 1970s and 80s, and revolving around the rebellion and confrontation between the father (from the war generation), and the child (from the post-war generation). The *Familienroman*, on the other hand, began to appear in the 1990s, and sees the protagonist searching for their identity in the context of history as well as their own personal family life. Often including a conglomeration of individual, family and national history, the protagonists of the *Familienroman* present themselves as 'searching, suffering, interpreting, and learning' individuals.<sup>1</sup> The generic shifts between the 1970s and the 1990s correspond to generational change, as *Familienromane* are often written by the grandchildren of the war generation. It is examples of the *Familienroman* that will be explored in this thesis.

The narrators of the *Familienroman* acknowledge that their own identity is strongly connected to events in family history of which they themselves were not part. This attitude differentiates them from the narrators of *Väterliteratur*, and encourages not the condemnation that formed the dominant rhetoric of the *Väterliteratur*, but curiosity and the desire to understand (though not necessarily to forgive).<sup>2</sup>

A salient characteristic of more recent memory texts is the use of photographs, which distinguishes the *Familienroman* from *Väterliteratur* in terms of the visual appearance and materiality of the artefact. Inclusion of photography in fictional texts is not unknown before 1990, of

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<sup>1</sup> Aleida Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding: Generational Identities in Recent Memory Literature', trans. by Michael Ritterson, in *Victims and Perpetrators, 1933-1945: (Re)presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*, ed. by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006) pp. 29-48 (p. 33-34)

<sup>2</sup> A. Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding', p. 34

course, but digital typesetting and printing make the inclusion of visual material both cheaper and easier. W.G. Sebald was among the first writers to include photographs in his prose texts, such as *Schwindel. Gefühle* (1990), and *Die Ausgewanderten* (1992), the latter of which includes nearly eighty photographic images. The place and function of photographs in texts will be discussed later in this introduction, but in the case of *Die Ausgewanderten*, Harris summarises briefly that ‘Sebald will include images not because they underscore the written narrative but because they present the reader with that which the text alone cannot.’<sup>3</sup> As we will see in this discussion, the fact that the role of photography is supplementary to, rather than illustrative of, the verbal texts is a key technique of the works I analyse.

The four texts discussed in this thesis, which I will introduce shortly, were all written by the ‘third generation’ – the grandchildren – though they belong to different sociological generations. The texts were all published in the last decade, and all differ in their exact genre, layout, and perspectives, but all offer rich resources in terms of memory and photography, and typify wider trends in recent German-language writing to be identified.

\*

Much of the study of World War II, the Holocaust, and National Socialism revolves around memory, particularly when we look at the impact the events and ideas of the Nazi period had on the people involved and on subsequent generations. War records and data banks can provide us with the date of an election, or a number of lives lost, but these hard facts do not show us the mechanisms of repression within the post-war victim and perpetrator collectives, let alone the horror of a concentration camp. To even begin to understand the impact of National Socialism on both its victims and perpetrators we must rely on testimony and memory.<sup>4</sup> This is what makes memory so important to historians, psychologists, scholars, writers, and any number of others who are concerned with events of the past. The scholarship on memory in post-1945 Germany alone is enough to fill a library. Here I offer a short introduction to the key theories I draw on in later chapters.

### **‘Mastering’ the Past**

Ever since research has been conducted into memory in connection with the Holocaust and National Socialism there has been a call from Germans and non-Germans alike for Germany to ‘master’ its past; that is, to come to terms with it. It has been suggested, however, that this demand should be approached critically. It must be recognised that for Germany, memory is a subject that is deeply

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<sup>3</sup> Stefanie Harris, ‘The Return of the Dead: Memory and Photography in W.G. Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten*’, *German Quarterly*, 74 (2001), 379-91 (p. 379)

<sup>4</sup> See Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998)

entwined with the topics of the Holocaust and World War II.<sup>5</sup> 'Mastering' the past is not a simple undertaking for Germany collectively or its individuals;

In [...] society tensions flared between perpetrators and honest Germans (of the Nazi period: because perpetrators of the Third Reich turned into honest, law-abiding citizens in East and West Germany, which created for some another tension – in their inner selves), Auschwitz and moral taboos, guilt and belief in God, personal memories and public silences, shooting children and educating your own.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the call for Germany to master its past, the question remains whether this is actually possible or even desirable. The *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s is an example of this; the main issue was whether the crimes committed by the National Socialists were unique in their gravity or whether they could be compared to other atrocities, particularly Stalinist crimes. Some are of the opinion that whether the crimes were unique or not is not important; regardless of the mass murders committed by others, the deaths of so many are terrible.<sup>7</sup> Others have argued that in fact uniqueness is a critical issue; if Nazi crimes, though dreadful, are comparable to other atrocities, there is technically nothing to prevent Germany reclaiming a national acceptance like, for example, Soviet Russia, but if they are in a class of their own, Germany may never be able to master its past.<sup>8</sup> Another point of view states that 'whether one considers the Shoah as an exceptional event or as belonging to a wider historical category does not affect the possibility of drawing from it a universally valid significance. The difficulty appears when this statement is reversed.'<sup>9</sup>

Some might wonder why these questions were not asked earlier than the 1980s. Maier attributes this to several causes, one being a generational issue, as the debate mobilized mainly those who were born before the downfall of the Third Reich; 'perhaps the debate depended upon the final tug of a personally felt stake: participants needed either to redeem the honor of those they felt were maligned, or to make their own gesture of repudiation.'<sup>10</sup> Members of each new generation tend to label themselves as 'different' from previous generations, and this motivates the creation of a separate generational identity to emphasise its difference to others. Increasingly the younger generations, particularly in Germany, are more interested in their family history and what

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<sup>5</sup> Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche, *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002) p. 11

<sup>6</sup> Confino and Fritzsche, *The Work of Memory*, p. 14

<sup>7</sup> Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) p. 1

<sup>8</sup> Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, p. 1

<sup>9</sup> Saul Friedlander, 'Trauma, Memory, and Transference', in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995 [1994]) pp. 252-63 (p. 262)

<sup>10</sup> Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, p. 7



their predecessors experienced, rather than just what they have experienced themselves. They are also more eager to identify with others of their own 'kind', ie. their generation or family, for example, rather than to consider themselves as individuals.<sup>11</sup> The greater separation between the war generation and the third generation aids this interest in family history because, as the generations are further apart chronologically and generationally, the younger generation feels more able to ask questions and approach unfamiliar, and sometimes uncomfortable, topics. In psychoanalytic terms, the ability to approach the subject of the past only after a period of delay is an illustration of latency on the phylogenetic level, a notion to which I shall return shortly.

The recent adversity of having to come to terms with one's past is not unique to the *Historikerstreit*. According to Hannes Heer, director of the 1995 exhibition '*Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*', it was only after the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany that the enormity of National Socialist crimes could be dealt with.<sup>12</sup> Heer also claims that 'the traces of the Nazi period and its crimes "were so thoroughly erased that those involved were capable of giving the impression that there had never been any Nazis or National Socialism in Germany"'.<sup>13</sup> For the same reason the Holocaust has often been kept separate from the war, and its perpetrators separate from ordinary soldiers, because it was considered absolutely evil, and Germany had to separate its perpetrators from the rest of the population.<sup>14</sup> Coming to terms with the National Socialist past is not a straightforward issue. The Holocaust is often simplified into a straight-forward time-line of events, where 'anti-Semitism led to Nazism, Nazism practiced genocide, and both were destroyed in a spectacular, "happy" end'.<sup>15</sup> This fantasy is problematic because the lack of a clear beginning and resolution is not acknowledged; the world that produced the genocide then is still the same world, and still producing genocide. Heer's exhibition caused immense controversy when it opened in Germany, because it rendered untenable the widely-propagated view that the SS had been solely responsible for atrocities, and that the *Wehrmacht* had been a decent and upstanding professional army. I will return to this topic in Chapter 2. The exhibition is important to this thesis because it forced the general public to look at themselves, their relatives, and their family history in a different light, as the photographs in the texts I explore forced their authors to do.

Hannah Arendt visited post-war Germany in 1950 (having fled seventeen years previously) and found that despite the National Socialist past still dominating German life, Germans had already found methods of 'coping with' the past. Arendt heard many claims that Germans had not done

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<sup>11</sup> A. Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding', p. 31

<sup>12</sup> Janina Struk, *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War* (London: I.B. Tauris: 2011) p. 93

<sup>13</sup> Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 94

<sup>14</sup> Bartov, 2002, cited in Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 94

<sup>15</sup> Omer Bartov, *Murder in our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 53

anything that other nations were not capable of doing. This coil mechanism of denial seemed to emerge again following the *Historikerstreit* and the controversy caused by scholars' views that the history of the Third Reich might need revision and reinterpretation.<sup>16</sup> The Germans wanted to escape reality; each individual had the right to their opinion, or even the right 'not to know'.<sup>17</sup>

I believe that the *Historikerstreit*, while opening the debate on mastering the past in Germany and encouraging discourse on coming to terms with the Holocaust, actually made the task more difficult for Germany, because the unpleasant events were suddenly forced into the public arena at great speed and as a group of events, rather than surfacing gradually over time. Following the wide-ranging debate, it is *not* comparable to other atrocities, because other atrocities that are potentially comparable in size and severity lack subsequent discourse to the same extent as has occurred following National Socialism. Now a certain amount of discomfort among descendants is almost expected or even required in a way that is not the case for other post-atrocity communities. To use the example of the Soviet Union, often cited in connection with the *Historikerstreit*, the global community has never put the same pressure on the subsequent generations as it has on Germany. This is why subsequent generations of Russians do not feel the same historical perpetrator burdens that their German counterparts do.<sup>18</sup>

Vital to the studies of my four texts is Welzer et al's study *Opa war kein Nazi*. The study on the passing on of historical awareness combined information compiled from 142 interviews and 40 family conversations conducted with Germans with a National Socialist past, their children, and grandchildren. The focus of the study was to investigate the communication between the generations regarding how the war generation passed down their memories and experiences of National Socialism around the World War II.<sup>19</sup> The results indicated similarities to the children's game of 'Chinese Whispers'; stories are passed down through the generations and evolve, or are distorted, based on how an individual best understands them.<sup>20</sup> The children and grandchildren of former perpetrators found it hard to imagine the atrocities of World War II, even though they know they took place;

Die Zeitzeugen erscheinen in der Darstellung ihrer Nachkommen als unauffällige  
Widerstandskämpfer, die klug genug waren, sich nach außen hin anzupassen, um dann,  
wenn es darauf ankam, Verfolgten zu helfen, „Juden“ zu verstecken oder – wenn solche

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<sup>16</sup> Bartov, *Murder in our Midst*, p. 71

<sup>17</sup> Bartov, *Murder in our Midst*, p. 72

<sup>18</sup> Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, p. 1

<sup>19</sup> Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, *„Opa war kein Nazi“: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2003 [2002]) p. 11

<sup>20</sup> Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, *„Opa war kein Nazi“*, p. 14

Geschichten im narrativen Inventar des Familienalbums nicht vorhanden sind – jedenfalls kleine Akte des Widerstands zu leisten.<sup>21</sup>

The study found that approximately two thirds of families interviewed, and indeed of the stories told, indicated that they or their relatives had suffered during the National Socialist past or had been heroes of everyday resistance.<sup>22</sup> It was also discovered that there was a conflict of beliefs; on the one hand the children and grandchildren acknowledged the National Socialist past without question, but often placed their own relatives outside of what they knew. The results of this study contradict the accepted concepts of *Väterliteratur* and the *68er Generation*,<sup>23</sup> because they were eager to condemn their relatives rather than excuse them.

### Latency

The beginnings of more recent memory theory, and particularly that which I will be exploring later in this thesis, are heavily indebted to Freud, who first explored the workings of cultural memory in his earlier works but developed his approach most fully in his late text *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen*.

This study offers a revisionist history of the Jewish religion. The generally accepted story of Moses is that which is told in the Bible: a Jewish Levite infant is rescued from the Nile by an Egyptian princess, is named Moses, and brought up as a prince of Egypt. He discovers his true roots and turns his back on his adoptive family, escaping to Midian where the God of Israel appears to him and commands him to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses leads the Exodus out of Egypt across the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, where he receives the Ten Commandments, and dies after many years of wandering the desert, within sight of the Promised Land.

Freud offers an alternative hypothesis to the biblical version. The story in the Book of Exodus and its description of Moses' heritage is rarely disputed, but Moses' name suggests he was in fact Egyptian.<sup>24</sup> Freud begins his claim by querying the story of Moses' heritage, as it does not follow the

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<sup>21</sup> Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, *„Opa war kein Nazi“*, p. 53

<sup>22</sup> Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, *„Opa war kein Nazi“*, p. 54

<sup>23</sup> The *68er Generation* was a student movement that took place in West Germany in the late 1960s. More broadly they were rebelling against the the West German government, which they perceived to be authoritarian and hypocritical, and an inheritance from fascist Germany, but they were also rebelling against the National Socialist past and their parents' involvement in it. Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationsromanen seit der Wende* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005) p. 185-86

<sup>24</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion', in *Studienausgabe*, vol. 9, ed. by Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2009 [1939]) pp. 455-581 (p. 460)

normal conventions of a heroic story. Normally a child of aristocratic birth is brought up by a humble family; in Moses' case the opposite occurs.<sup>25</sup>

Freud does not dispute the idea that Moses led the Jews out of Egypt, and his next step is to identify the religion that Moses converted them to. He writes: 'Wenn Moses ein Ägypter war und wenn er den Juden seine eigene Religion übermittelte, so war es die des Ikhnaton [Akhenaten], die Aton [Aten] Religion'.<sup>26</sup> This religion was started by Pharaoh Akhenaten, and was a monotheistic religion which contrasted with the polytheistic religion we normally associate with the Egyptians. This is explained by the possibility that Moses was a contemporary of Pharaoh Akhenaten, perhaps an official, and was convinced by this new religion so that after the Pharaoh's death, when the religion was supposedly wiped out, he wished to continue it. According to Freud's theory, Moses led his close followers to freedom during a period of political instability following Akhenaten's death. Moses' followers rebelled and murdered him, later joining with another monotheistic tribe in Midian who worshipped the God Yahweh.<sup>27</sup> When the people began to regret Moses' murder and to try to forget it, there occurred the union of the two peoples at Qades. When the Exodus and the foundation of the religion were brought closer together in time, and Moses was considered to have been involved in the latter instead of the Midianite priest of the same name, the demands of Moses' regretful followers were met as well as the facts of his murder disavowed.<sup>28</sup> Freud concludes:

Zu den bekannten Zweiheiten dieser Geschichte – *zwei* Volksmassen, die zur Bildung der Nation zusammentreten, *zwei* Reiche, in die diese Nation zerfällt, *zwei* Gottesnamen in den Quellenschriften der Bibel – fügen wir zwei neue hinzu: *Zwei* Religionsstiftungen, die erste durch die andere verdrängt und später doch siegreich hinter ihr zum Vorschein gekommen, *zwei* Religionsstifter, die beide mit dem gleichen Namen Moses benannt werden und deren Persönlichkeiten wir voneinander zu sondern haben.<sup>29</sup>

When theorizing about the adoption of the new religion, Freud writes that the people who had come from Egypt still held strong memories of the Exodus and of Moses, and so they insisted the memories be included in the peoples' historical records; 'es waren vielleicht die Enkel von Personen, die Moses selbst gekannt hatten, und einige von ihnen fühlten sich noch als Ägypter und trugen ägyptische Namen'.<sup>30</sup>

Freud describes this process in terms of *latency*. He explains latency in earlier essays but an extensive description of the theory is found in *Der Mann Moses*. He theorises that when a sudden

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<sup>25</sup> Freud, 'Der Mann Moses', p. 464

<sup>26</sup> Freud, 'Der Mann Moses', p. 475

<sup>27</sup> Freud, 'Der Mann Moses', p. 487

<sup>28</sup> Freud, 'Der Mann Moses', p. 497

<sup>29</sup> Freud, 'Der Mann Moses', p. 501

<sup>30</sup> Freud, 'Der Mann Moses', p. 517

change occurs, and this change could be an individual event or a collective experience, the acceptance of the change and the subsequent processing of it are not immediate. Freud gives several examples; summarised briefly, if an individual received some information that was new to him which was supported by evidence, and logically he should believe, but does not correspond to his personal beliefs or wishes, he will hesitate to accept this information. He searches for evidence to disprove the information, and will face an internal struggle initially, before finally accepting that the information is correct. In psychoanalytic terms, an individual might be involved in an accident and initially appear uninjured, but might, several weeks later, develop severe psychological symptoms – ‘traumatic neurosis’.<sup>31</sup> This might explain why, for example, the *Historikerstreit* took place no earlier than the 1980s, and why it is only members of the third generation that are able to explore their grandparents’ stories in such detail. All four of the texts I will explore in this thesis are the result of a dual latency period; a latency period between the generations, and one between the discovery of material and the beginning of research. As in Freud, then, latency will be seen to operate on both ontogenetic and phylogenetic levels, and I will return to this topic in later chapters.

### Postmemory

Marianne Hirsch has developed the idea that the grandchildren of Moses’ generation, who had never known him, yet held strong memories of him, and describes it using the term *postmemory*. While Freud’s theory on Moses has been influential, it was the theoretical model of transgenerational transmission it suggested, rather than the revisionist account of Moses’ heritage, which has been widely adopted by others. Postmemory has been widely applied when dealing with post-Holocaust works, particularly in connection with photographic images. As a theory it has evolved since its conception, and this evolution is key to its richness but also its drawbacks. In her book *Family Frames* Hirsch defines postmemory as follows:

Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. [...] In my reading, postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Freud, ‘Der Mann Moses’, p. 516

<sup>32</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative, and postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002 [1997]) p. 22

She goes on to explain that she applies this theory to children of Holocaust survivors, but that it might well be applicable to 'other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences'.

This implies that the children of trauma survivors have no choice in whether they experience postmemory or not; the experiences and memories of their parents are so strong that they replace the child's own. However, in her later article *Projected Memory* Hirsch has broadened her definition and the demographic to which the theory is applicable:<sup>33</sup>

[Postmemory] is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as one's own, or, more precisely, as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story. It is a question of conceiving oneself as multiply interconnected with others of the same, of previous, and of subsequent generations, of the same and of other – proximate or distant – cultures and subcultures.<sup>34</sup>

Hirsch specifies that postmemory is not necessarily restricted to the family, or even to a culture; 'through particular forms of identification, adoption, and projection, it can be more broadly available'.<sup>35</sup> This revised definition of postmemory suggests that its effects might in fact be a matter of choice, and that an individual may, with some imagination, be able to adopt the traumatic memories and experiences of an unconnected individual or culture. If this is the case, it diminishes the power of the concept of familial inter-generational memory transfer; if any individual is able to take on the memories and experiences of another, then the transfer of trauma within the family from one generation to another does not carry the importance that is indicated in Hirsch's original definition of postmemory, which implies that a strong generational and familial bond is required for it to take place. If any person can take on another's memories then a familial bond is simply not necessary for postmemorial transmission to take place.

As I mentioned above, Hirsch states that postmemory is not only applicable to the children of Holocaust survivors, but that children of 'victims, survivors, witnesses, or perpetrators' can also be affected, though their experiences of postmemory are different.<sup>36</sup>

It seems that Hirsch is trying to make her theory fit every eventuality, which is potentially highly problematic. Postmemory loses its conceptual rigour if it is simultaneously both dependent on

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<sup>33</sup> Marita Grimwood, 'Postmemorial Positions: Reading and Writing after the Holocaust in Anne Michael's *Fugitive Pieces*', *Canadian Jewish Studies*, 11 (2003), 111-30 (p. 114)

<sup>34</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural recall in the present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) pp. 3-23 (p. 9)

<sup>35</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001) pp. 215-46 (p. 220)

<sup>36</sup> Hirsch, 'Surviving Images', p. 220

intergenerational transmission *and* open to any individual with an imagination; it must either be a structure of trauma transmission where survivors pass on their experiences to their descendants, who take on the trauma as their own, or a process by which an individual wholly unconnected with an event in history can take on the experience purely by imagination. The reason why postmemory cannot be both is that it would lose the ethical aspect that Hirsch attaches to it.

If postmemory is applicable to anybody with an imagination, it loses the significance and impact of familial transmission; as Long writes, 'the universal availability of the postmemorial position carries the potential for distinctly unethical exploitation'.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, it also implicitly devalues the traumatic experiences of the first generation. If we suggest that any person can take on the traumatic memories of another, we risk implying that the experiences of the first generation can only be fully present to the second generation, or, indeed, any individual who adopts a postmemorial position. These belated experiences are implicitly more valuable and important than those of the first generation. A further complication is that even if we use the term postmemory to refer to structures of transgenerational transmission, we do not preclude postmemorial structures from existing within perpetrator families and collectives. This is an aspect of postmemory that has been under-theorised, and one which again raises serious ethical questions.

Hirsch herself states that the adoption of memories on the side of the perpetrators is possible. For some, the idea that perpetrators can be traumatised by events and memories is unethical because it diminishes the power of the trauma suffered by the victims. However, more recent memory scholarship on the perpetrators of the Holocaust suggests that National Socialist soldiers were indeed traumatised by what they heard, saw, and were ordered to do, although of course their experiences were entirely different to the victims of the Holocaust in terms of their moral valency. Browning's investigation into Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland found many statements to echo this.<sup>38</sup> Without, however, equating the experiences of the descendants of perpetrators with those of victims, the postmemories that are experienced, constructed and explored in the four texts I discuss can be seen to rely on analogous structures of latency and return. A repeated theme in all four is the silence through which they experience the past, as their memories revolve around what was not said or explained. In this sense, the texts can all be seen as acts of postmemory; it is through the exploration of family history and the extensive handling of photographs and other documentary materials that the authors might adopt memories that are not their own.

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<sup>37</sup> J.J. Long, 'Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe*: Photography, Narrative, and the Claims of Postmemory', in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006) pp. 147-65 (p. 149)

<sup>38</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992) p. xviii

Postmemory is best applied only to the descendants of those who have suffered, or been involved in, a traumatic event. The reason for this is that an unconnected individual lacks two characteristics that are in my view vital for postmemory to take place; the information and sensory overload of the trauma in question, and the familial connection to the sufferer. Without the former an individual simply would not have the emotional basis for postmemory to take place; without the latter the former would be worthless. Only when the two are combined is postmemory fully possible.

In what follows, I do not attempt to determine whether or not the real author of a text 'experiences' postmemory, but rather to explore the aspects of postmemory that a text creates and produces.

It is of course feasible that a wholly unconnected individual with a vivid imagination might imagine life in a concentration camp, and might even think they know what the experience was like. Examples of this have been published, for example Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Bruchstücke*.

As I have already mentioned, the ways that memory is understood and theorized within cultural, historical and literary studies are of Freudian origin. In Freudian theory, memory and psychological trauma are closely connected. Caruth writes that 'particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text [*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*], the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind'.<sup>39</sup> If a trauma survivor is incapable of communicating their experience to others the effects of the trauma are significantly stronger. To combat this, the victim's only defence is to suppress all memories of the event; 'in effect, to equate silence with an absence of suffering'. Although the victim feels that the denial of psychological and linguistic trauma is the only way to continue living, it actually inhibits the victim's recovery.<sup>40</sup> This is one of the reasons why even the war generation on the perpetrators' side kept their silence for several decades; because many of them were traumatised by what they had seen, or heard about, under National Socialism, and why it is only now that perpetrator families, and Germany as a whole, are able to approach their difficult (family) pasts. The argument could be made that Germany is only now able to begin the reconstruction process of their national memory.

A theorist on trauma, and perhaps best-known as the father of psychoanalysis, Freud was also interested in history, and attempting to explain it psychoanalytically; Freudian theory has significant value in the 'search for a comprehensive understanding of the past'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) p. 3

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Snyder Hook, 'Awakening from War: History, Trauma, and Testimony in Heinrich Böll', in *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture*, ed. by Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002) pp. 136-53 (p. 137)

<sup>41</sup> Gay, 1985, cited in Hutton, 'Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs', p. 2



Hutton considers Freud to be an historian due to the implications collective memory can have for the understanding of historical events. To explore Freudian theory through the theme of memory can provide a new interpretation of Freud's theory on history.<sup>42</sup> In order to do this Freudian theory is compared to that of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs,<sup>43</sup> relevant here because Halbwachs' work on collective memory influenced later memory work, particularly cultural memory, to which I will return shortly.

Halbwachs was a contemporary of Freud, and despite his working in a different field, memory was a topic that interested both. In Halbwachsian theory, 'memory and history are fundamentally opposed in their purposes. Memory is not the hidden ground of history, as it was for Freud, but an internal activity of the living mind that can never be recovered.'<sup>44</sup> Halbwachs uses the analogy of the childhood book to demonstrate this. When we revisit a favourite childhood book as adults, we anticipate that the same memories and feelings will recur, and that we can even remember our mental state from that point, but often we find that the book appears to be different.<sup>45</sup> Often uncomfortable circumstances from the past are forgotten because they are no longer in motion.<sup>46</sup> This idea is effectively at odds with Freudian theory, as well as more recent memory theory, because although unpleasant circumstances are sometimes 'forgotten', it is not necessarily because they are no longer operating, but because they have been repressed, or kept silent. For Freud, nothing is ever truly forgotten in the sense of being entirely eradicated from the mind.

Despite the clear differences between Halbwachs and Freud, the former has been highly influential for recent theorists of memory – and of postmemory – because of his theory of *collective memory*; the shared pool of information of two or more members of a group.<sup>47</sup> J. Assmann writes:

Vom Individuum aus gesehen stellt sich das Gedächtnis als ein Agglomerat dar, das sich aus seiner Teilhabe an einer Mannigfaltigkeit von Gruppengedächtnissen ergibt; von der Gruppe aus gesehen stellt es sich als eine Frage der Distribution dar, als ein Wissen, das sie in ihrem Innern, d.h. unter ihren Mitgliedern verteilt. Die Erinnerungen bilden jeweils ein "unabhängiges System", dessen Elemente sich gegenseitig stützen und bestimmen, sowohl im Individuum als auch im Rahmen der Gruppe. Daher ist es für Halbwachs wichtig,

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<sup>42</sup> Patrick H. Hutton, 'Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs: The Problem of Memory in Historical Psychology', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 19 (1993), 1-16 (p. 2)

<sup>43</sup> Hutton, 'Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs', p. 3

<sup>44</sup> Hutton, 'Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs', p. 7

<sup>45</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by L.A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) p. 46

<sup>46</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 51

<sup>47</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 22. In many ways, contemporary memory theory can be seen as an attempt to reconcile Freud and Halbwachs by proposing a psychoanalytically-inflected account of collective memory.

individuelles und kollektives Gedächtnis zu unterscheiden, auch wenn das individuelle Gedächtnis immer schon ein soziales Phänomen ist. Individuell ist es im Sinne einer je einzigartigen Verbindung von Kollektivgedächtnissen als Ort der verschiedenen gruppenbezogenen Kollektivgedächtnisse und ihrer je spezifischen Verbindung.<sup>48</sup>

An example of this is the memory that a family shares; regardless of how closely family members live to each other, each of them has their own way of remembering their shared past.<sup>49</sup> It is important to consider familial memories alongside individual memory; otherwise memory would become just discreet collections of images that would emphasize the differences in memory between family members.<sup>50</sup> The reason why Halbwachs alone is insufficient, however, becomes clear when we consider collective memory on a national scale in post-war Germany. Instead of Germany's collective memory being built on frequently discussed events organised in more or less chronological order, it has emerged on the basis of a series of discontinuous, painful discoveries and rediscoveries. The silence that, in many accounts, characterises the war generation's relationship with subsequent generations has, at various points, been disrupted by the sudden invasion of suppressed or repressed memories, under the pressure of political and cultural change. Among the salient moments in this process, we might mention the Eichmann Trials (1963), the screening of the American TV drama *Holocaust* in the late 1970s, the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s and the *Wehrmacht* exhibition of the 1990s. Although National Socialism and the Holocaust have become an important part of Germany's collective memory, we need a psychoanalytical model of latency and return, rather than a model of a shared repository, if we are to understand the processes of silence and sudden periodic information overload that have affected its development. German collective memory consists not merely of a series of events; it is now characterised by a series of discoveries.

Collective memory has the potential to be much stronger than individual memory; while individual memory fades over time, the authority of collective memory does quite the opposite, taking on new perspectives as time passes.<sup>51</sup> However, collective memories allow for more addition or omission of details about the past, in response to issues such as identity and politics.<sup>52</sup> Central to collective memory are narratives, which strengthen collective memory; they connect individual experiences to a collective story, and in doing so establish authority. Regardless of the context, institutions depend on them for 'legitimacy and coherence'. Because they can be integrated into

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<sup>48</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 2013 [1992]) p. 37

<sup>49</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 54

<sup>50</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 55

<sup>51</sup> Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) p. 3

<sup>52</sup> Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, p. 3

multiple narratives, collective memories begin as a weak memory form, but are strengthened once they become embedded, and are able to deflect counter-arguments and counter-narratives.<sup>53</sup> As we shall see in what follows, though, counter-narratives are always available, and always have the potential to emerge in ways that disrupt the dominant narratives that structure collective memories.

There is, though, a further consideration, which is that Freud and later trauma theorists oppose traumatic recall (based on the sudden eruption of highly visual memories into consciousness) and narrative memory (based on the integration of remembered life-events into a coherent story). From the point of view of collective memory, there is thus a difference between collective memory omitting details of the past, and the narrative never being created in the first place. The former can give rise to denial when it is suggested that an 'unknown' or hitherto unacknowledged event might have taken place because there is no perceived gap in the narrative. The latter, as part of the structure of trauma, creates a rupture in memory which, once it becomes apparent, can be filled by later generations. This rupture can correspond to the latency period in psychoanalytic accounts of memory.

The idea of collective memory can be traced back to, among others, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 'super-individual memory', Aby Warburg's work on *mentalities* and 'social memory', as well as Halbwachs, who coined the term 'collective memory' in 1925; other theorists have traced it even further back. A foundation text of contemporary memory discourse is Jan Assmann's work on *cultural memory*,<sup>54</sup> which has been central to the study of memory in relation to National Socialism.

Als Oberbegriff für den mit den Stichwörtern "Traditionsbildung", "Vergangenheitsbezug" und "politische Identität bzw. Imagination" umrissenen Funktionsrahmen brauchen wir den Begriff des kulturellen Gedächtnisses. Dieses Gedächtnis ist kulturell, weil es nur institutionell, artifiziell realisiert werden kann, und es ist ein Gedächtnis, weil es in Bezug auf gesellschaftliche Kommunikation genauso funktioniert wie das individuelle Gedächtnis in Bezug auf Bewußtsein.<sup>55</sup>

Assmann claims that the difference between yesterday and today can be exemplified best in the case of death; 'Tote bzw. das Andenken an sie werden nicht "tradiert". Daß man sich an sie erinnert, ist Sache affektiver Bindung, kultureller Formung und bewußten, den Bruch überwindenden Vergangenheitsbezugs'.<sup>56</sup> Cultural memory is closely connected with identity, something that history

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<sup>53</sup> Campbell, 1998, cited in Confino and Fritzsche, *The Work of Memory*, p. 8

<sup>54</sup> Frederick Whitling, 'Damnation Memoriae and the Power of Remembrance: Reflections on Memory and History', in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. by Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012 [2010]) pp. 87-97 (p. 88)

<sup>55</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 24

<sup>56</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 34

lacks; 'Denn es gibt zwar viele Kollektivgedächtnisse, aber nur eine Historie, die jeden Bezug auf eine Gruppe, eine Identität, einen spezifischen Bezugspunkt abgestreift hat und die Vergangenheit in einem "identitätsabstrakten" Tableau rekonstruiert'.<sup>57</sup>

Cultural memory contains an element of the sacred and mythical; historical fact can become myth.<sup>58</sup> It is also inherently connected to power; conquerers and victors take control of the future as well as the past in order to be remembered. Conversely, under certain conditions the repressed and underprivileged can use memory as an instrument of resistance.<sup>59</sup> An example of this is the extermination of Jews under National Socialism:

Die Vernichtung des europäischen Judentums z.B. ist eine geschichtliche Tatsache und als solcher Gegenstand der historischen Forschung. Im modernen Israel jedoch ist sie darüber hinaus (und übrigens erst in den letzten zehn Jahren) unter der Bezeichnung "Holocaust" zur fundierenden Geschichte und damit zum Mythos geworden, aus der dieser Staat einen wichtigen Teil seiner Legitimierung und Orientierung bezieht.<sup>60</sup>

The Holocaust has also gained a place in Germany's cultural memory and national identity. Since the *Historikerstreit* and German reunification, great importance has been placed on the remembrance of and education about the Holocaust to ensure that it is acknowledged as an important part of German history, and how it became part of the foundation of modern German identity. Care must be taken, however, when the term 'myth' is used in this particular context; an uninformed use of the word might lead to the inference that the Holocaust did not actually take place, and that it is but a story told to the following generations. 'Myth' in this context should be taken to mean that the Holocaust has taken on a national and international importance spanning the past, present, and future.

Cultural memory is closely connected with death and remembrance. It is the duty of the living to remember the dead, and according to A. Assmann this *Totengedächtnis* has both a secular and a religious dimension, which she terms *Fama* and *Pietas*. *Pietas* depends on the living dutifully remembering the dead, as it is something only the living can achieve for those who have passed away, while *Fama* can be achieved by somebody during their lifetime.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 43

<sup>58</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 52

<sup>59</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 70-73

<sup>60</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 76

<sup>61</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, Beck, 2006 [1999]) p. 33

Furthermore, the importance of cultural memory increases when it is recognised that the past is severed from the present.<sup>62</sup> When the sacred and mythical, the connections with power, and death, are combined, they form powerful contributions to cultural memory. As with collective memory, the silence that characterised the decades after the fall of National Socialism has meant that Germany's cultural memory has effectively had to be reconstructed through information gathered belatedly. As we will see in the discussion of the four texts this thesis is concerned with, this has the potential to exert a slight traumatizing effect on the third generation as the re-creators of a national cultural memory, a sort of individual-national postmemory.

Generational transfer complicates national remembrance because the experience of the Third Reich is different for every generation; 'remembering and mourning will be different because the Third Reich is no longer part of a lived experience: it has become an imaginative construct'. The current generation's methods of dealing with the past are different because they are not the generation who brought Hitler to power, or who have to take direct responsibility for what happened.<sup>63</sup> Today's German youth reacts very differently to the memories of the Holocaust than the previous generation; they see it in the wider global context as preceding subsequent genocides such as Rwanda and Darfur, which globalizes the Holocaust and turns it into a universal moral legacy.<sup>64</sup>

Generational change thus combines with the difficulties and problems that have followed National Socialism and the Holocaust, its silence and memorial reconstruction, to inform the richness of the literature that has emerged from the descendants of the war generation.

### Photography

The importance of images and photography to memory has long been recognized; photography was being used as a 'metaphor for memory', and was, as a concept, being connected to memory in psychological scholarship long before its importance to other disciplines was recognised.<sup>65</sup> According to Zelizer, however, the reason for this importance is not yet fully understood, as we still do not comprehend how exactly photographs aid memory, particularly in the case of memories that are not

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<sup>62</sup> Confino and Fritzsche, *The Work of Memory*, p.8

<sup>63</sup> Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen, 'German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness', in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995 [1994]) pp. 175-90 (p. 176-77)

<sup>64</sup> Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, 'Remembering Europe's Heart of Darkness: Legacies of the Holocaust in Post-war European Societies', in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. by Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012 [2010]) pp. 163-74 (p. 174)

<sup>65</sup> James Kaye, 'Seeing Dark and Writing Light: Photography Approaching Dark and Obscure Histories', in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. by Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012 [2010]) pp. 98-114 (p. 102)

our own.<sup>66</sup> Hirsch suggests that the reason for this is that 'photography provides a particularly powerful medium of postmemory'.<sup>67</sup> The power of photography has two sources; its 'truth' factor and its symbolic force.<sup>68</sup> A photograph is often thought of as 'proof' that something occurred or that someone existed, but it also holds a deeper symbolic significance because of the act of seeing itself.<sup>69</sup> Although the complexities of why photography aids memory are perhaps not yet fully understood, photographs are important to families because they enable them to retain their predecessors, even if they did not know them personally.

When a memory is a specific familial memory, photography becomes particularly important as the subjects are personal to us, and evoke the *familial gaze*. This term describes the 'conventions and ideologies of family through which they see themselves'; photographs show the positioning of family members among themselves and in relation to the familial gaze.<sup>70</sup> A photograph comprises numerous looks and gazes; that between the photographer/camera and the subject; that between the image's subjects, that of the viewer, and that of the institution and ideology that define the act of taking pictures.<sup>71</sup>

The familial gaze becomes more complicated when family photographs are removed from their original personal context; the 'private image acquires a very different set of personal and cultural meanings than it had in its original familial setting'.<sup>72</sup> Hirsch writes that 'those who analyze the familial gaze must [...] be as self-conscious about their own viewing positions as they are vigilant about the postures they analyze. They must be aware that to look is also, always, to be seen'.<sup>73</sup>

Hirsch asks what we might be able to learn from family pictures, regardless of type or whether the subjects are related to us or not; 'the rigid conventions they follow seem to shore up dominant familial myths and ideologies, supporting a circumscribed and static self-representation of the family and closing it off from scrutiny and critique'.<sup>74</sup>

Hirsch's question seems to indicate that it is easy to identify stories from photographs, especially those of our own families, but while we might be able to recognize one individual's attitude to another through scrutinizing body language, there are very few cases where we can identify a family's story based on a photograph. Novak cites Holland, who claims that the human longing for

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<sup>66</sup> Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, p. 2

<sup>67</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile', *Poetics Today*, 17 (1996), 659-86 (p. 660)

<sup>68</sup> Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, p. 8

<sup>69</sup> Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, p. 9

<sup>70</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) p. xi

<sup>71</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xvi

<sup>72</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xii

<sup>73</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xv

<sup>74</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xvi

narrative means we try to organize traces of the past, so while family photographic collections offer 'glimpses of many possible pasts', they can never be just memories.<sup>75</sup>

Novak describes hunting for photographs of her family, including herself, which would reveal stories and narratives to her.<sup>76</sup> If she could not identify a complete story from photographs she herself was present for, how is it that we think we have the ability to identify stories from photographs of subjects completely unknown to us? Not only that, but both Novak and Watney refer to the fact that photographs only show specific points in time, and often the subjects are smiling, '[putting] a brave face on things',<sup>77</sup> their expressions perhaps not representative of their true feelings. This makes identifying stories even more challenging for us; how are we supposed to identify the true feelings and body language from the staged? 'Anyone who has posed for a happy group snapshot at a stressful family event understands how photographs can be fabricated, and in time, alter memories'.<sup>78</sup> Hirsch notes that when families photograph themselves in a familial setting they subconsciously reflect dominant expectations of family life.<sup>79</sup>

Zelizer states that the act of remembering depends largely on images, but, building on the work of Benjamin and Barthes, that the interpretation of those images depends on the words that accompany them. While this is the case with any image, in the case of aiding memory the dependence on words is magnified because they provide 'order and connection'.<sup>80</sup> Although journalists have always used images, they have long used them only in support of their writing.<sup>81</sup> Harris cites Mitchell's theory that there are "'textual pictures'" and "'pictorial texts'"; there is a difference between texts that contain photographs to support the text, and a book of captioned photographs, where the texts support the images and supply what they cannot.<sup>82</sup>

Photography, in its analogue form, has also become a metaphor for psychoanalysis in memory, based in the delay between the photograph being taken and the image appearing; this corresponds to the latency I have already mentioned in this introduction, as well as the 'sudden recall of buried memories after a period of latency'. Photography can be regarded as a 'belated symptom of familial and collective history' rather than as memory.<sup>83</sup> It is also closely connected to symptoms of

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<sup>75</sup> Lorie Novak, 'Collected Visions', in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) pp. 14-31 (p. 14)

<sup>76</sup> Novak, 'Collected Visions', p. 15

<sup>77</sup> Novak, 'Collected Visions', p. 15

<sup>78</sup> Novak, 'Collected Visions', p. 27

<sup>79</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xvi

<sup>80</sup> Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, p. 5-6

<sup>81</sup> Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, p. 8

<sup>82</sup> Mitchell, 1994, cited in Harris, 'The Return of the Dead', p. 382

<sup>83</sup> J.J. Long, 'History, Narrative, and Photography in W.G. Sebald's "Die Ausgewanderten"', *The Modern Language Review*, 98 (2003), 117-37 (p. 126)

‘traumatic neurosis’ and trauma, as it is the repetitive visuals that form the basis.<sup>84</sup> This is why photography plays such an important role, particularly in memory writing.

In this thesis I will show that photographs are not always supportive of writing, and that in some cases they imply alternative narratives – counter-narratives – that relativise or even oppose the written text. This is particularly the case when narrators organise their photographs into ‘albums’ within the text. In interpreting photographs, I proceed from Caroline Brothers’ statement that ‘[photography’s] focus is selective, its vision is blinkered, its opinions always subjective’.<sup>85</sup>

### The Texts

I will explore the texts through four sections that will build on each other.<sup>86</sup> The chapters will begin with the topic I refer to as the Unsaid/Unseen, which explores the conspicuous discursive and visual absences that are either thematised by or embodied in the texts. These areas encompass various issues, but could be connected to absent family members, resources, or memories. In each case, I then proceed to analyse the question of Albums versus Individual Photographs, which analyses the placement and layout of the photographs in the texts, as well as the photographs themselves, and the effects these can have on the interpretation of the words in the text. My third central concern, deriving from the first two, is Counter-narratives, and I explore the *other* narratives, intentional or otherwise, that are created by the Unsaid/Unseen and the photograph choice and layout. These counter-narratives are able, in some cases, to create a completely different story to that created by the narrator through their chosen words. The final topic, on Gender and Family Structure, explores the texts from the perspective of gender politics and representation.

The division of chapters into four sections is designed to give this thesis structure and aid the comparisons between and discussion of the texts individually and as a corpus. The length and scope of each section is dependent on the text itself.

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In Chapter 1 explore Thomas Medicus’ *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, published in 2004. This text charts the author’s journey as he follows the travels of his grandfather, Wilhelm Crisolli, during World War II, and tries to discover more about him and the circumstances surrounding his death at

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<sup>84</sup> Long, ‘History, Narrative, and Photography’, p. 125

<sup>85</sup> Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A cultural history* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 15

<sup>86</sup> As the specific genre varies, and in some cases the genre itself is unclear, my chosen pieces will be referred to as ‘texts’ throughout this thesis. On the idea of the ‘text’, Rimmon-Kenan writes that ‘whereas “story” is a succession of events, “text” is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling. Put more simply, the text is what we read. In it, the events do not necessarily appear in chronological order, the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout, and all the items of the narrative content are filtered through some prism or perspective (“focalizer”).’ Schlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 3



the hands of Italian partisans in Tuscany. Crisolli took part in the invasion of Poland, fought on the Western Front and in Serbia, was wounded at the Russian Front, before being stationed in Tuscany for the final years of his life. This text was chosen because it is a typical text – if there is such a thing – for a discussion such as this. Because of this and its photographic resources it offers an ideal example with which to begin this discussion.

Chapter 2 is concerned with Moritz Pfeiffer's 2012 text *Mein Großvater im Krieg*. This text is the result of the author's history studies at university, constructed through interviews with his grandfather and his own research. In this chapter I introduce the idea of the physical photograph album within the text, and explore the powerful counter-narratives that this can create. This text was selected because it is one of the first, if not the first, of its kind to be published, and includes an extensive photographic collection which contributes richly to my discussion.

In Chapter 3 I explore Stephan Wackwitz's *Ein unsichtbares Land*, published in 2005. The inspiration for this text was the return of a long-lost camera, and the subtext of what is not seen through the camera and in the writing continues my discussion of the counter-narrative. This text was chosen because it contributes a different perspective to photographs in memory writing, in that the majority of the photographs 'used' in the text do not actually exist.

Alexandra Senfft's 2008 text *Schweigen tut weh* is the subject of Chapter 4. The only text written by a woman, and the only text to revolve around a female protagonist, this text offers a different perspective on collective and familial memory, as well as an adaptation of Freud's family romance that corresponds to the female family relationships that it foregrounds. The chapter will also develop the argument concerning the opposition between the album and individual photographs.

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*In den Augen meines Großvaters* and *Ein unsichtbares Land* have already become canonised through their inclusion in several central scholarly treatments of post-*Wende* German literature. *Mein Großvater im Krieg* and *Schweigen tut weh*, on the other hand, have not been subjected to scholarly scrutiny. By investigating two well-known and two relatively new and unknown texts, my intention is to show that the genre of *Familienroman* is not static; the contributions to it have not yet ended and it remains a dynamic genre that permits of perpetual innovation.

## Chapter 1

### Thomas Medicus: *In den Augen meines Großvaters*

*In den Augen meines Großvaters* charts the narrator's journey as he traces the movements of his grandfather, Wilhelm Crisolli, during World War II, in an attempt to uncover the circumstances surrounding the latter's execution by Italian partisans in Tuscany. The narrator's journey is motivated by his desire to determine whether his grandfather was involved in war crimes committed against Italian civilians. But, as Anne Fuchs has shown, he is also motivated by the 'fear of an uncanny repetition effect'. Crisolli was executed at the age of 49, and Medicus hints that his father committed suicide at the same age. As Medicus himself approaches the age of 49, therefore, a sense of existential urgency prompts him to investigate the circumstances surrounding his grandfather's death.<sup>1</sup>

Approaching the year that was his grandfather's and his father's last, Medicus decides to open the time capsule containing documents and photos that is locked away in his desk: 'mein Großvater erschien mir plötzlich als der geheime Fluchtpunkt meiner Biographie, auf den alles zustrebte, was ich je getan oder nicht getan hatte, geworden oder nicht geworden bin. Ich entschloß mich, nach Wilhelm Crisolli zu forschen und das Rätsel seines Todes zu lösen'.<sup>2</sup> At the core of Medicus' attempt to reconstruct his grandfather's biography are 51 photographs that were taken by Crisolli and his colleagues while they were stationed in Italy in 1944.<sup>3</sup> The timing of Medicus' decision to eventually examine these takes on particular significance when examined through the lens of Freud's *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion*. As I explained in the introduction, Freud shows that, for example, an individual might be involved in an accident and initially appear uninjured, but might, several weeks later, develop severe psychological symptoms, known as 'traumatic neurosis'.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, having inherited the photographs in 1986, Medicus did not begin to explore them until after 1996; the exact point in time is not given explicitly. Read against Freud's pronouncements, the extra distance that a decade gives Medicus to come to terms with family history is an important factor in his finally being ready to confront the photographs. This period of time corresponds to the

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 80

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Medicus, *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004) p. 54-55. Quotations from this text will be referenced 'Augen meines Großvaters, page number' only. Throughout this chapter, I use the term 'Medicus' to refer to the narrator (a textual function) rather than the empirical author.

<sup>3</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 83

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion', in *Studienausgabe*, vol. 9, ed. by Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2009 [1939]) pp. 455-581 (p. 516)

latency period described by Freud in the aforementioned essay, as well as the time delay in taking an analogue photograph, which I have mentioned in the introduction.

### **The Unsaid/Unseen**

*In den Augen meines Großvaters* is constructed from what is missing, and Medicus' interpretation of what was unsaid and unseen. The unsaid and unseen hold a pivotal position in the text, as it is not only what was unsaid to and unseen by Medicus that becomes apparent, but in turn what Medicus decides to leave unsaid to and unseen by the reader.

Medicus' interest in his family history can be traced back to the secrecy he experienced during childhood;

Das größte Geheimnis war die Welt außerhalb unseres Hauses, hinzu kamen die Geheimnisse, die meiner Phantasie entsprungen waren. Deren Mittelpunkt bildete unser Nachbaranwesen, ein kleines Jagdschloß aus der Barockzeit. [...] Es war nicht verboten, ihn zu betreten. Aber ich wußte nicht, wo sich der Eingang befand, und ich fragte auch nie danach.<sup>5</sup>

The childhood experience that Medicus describes here functions as a metaphor for his grandfather's military involvement and Germany's National Socialist past, itself a secret closely guarded by his family to which he had no access as a child. He continues:

Bei uns sprach nie jemand über den Krieg. Weder meine Mutter noch mein Vater verloren je ein Wort darüber. "Flug nach Arras" [a book his mother had given him] handelte von nichts anderem. [...] Ich begriff nicht, wer hier gegen wen kämpfte und wer vor wem wohin floh. Niemand klärte mich über die Kämpfe und die Fluchten auf, die in diesem Buch stattfanden und dessen Bilder mich unbegriffen in Besitz nahmen. Man hatte nicht mit mir reden, mir aber schweigend etwas mitteilen wollen.<sup>6</sup>

By presenting her son with a copy of 'Flug nach Arras',<sup>7</sup> Medicus' mother is evidently trying to educate him about the War without prompting discomfort and difficult questions, thereby ensuring

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<sup>5</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 17

<sup>6</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 19

<sup>7</sup> A novel set in France during the German Occupation by Frenchman Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Displaying strong autobiographical tendencies, the text explores the effect of war on individuals through descriptions of flying missions. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942)

that the family's guilt and shame remain unsaid and unseen. As a result, however, Medicus became confused; 'Ich begriff nicht, wer hier gegen wen kämpfte und wer vor wem wohin floh'.<sup>8</sup>

A consequence of the lack of communication between Medicus' extended family and their children and grandchildren is that the function of familial memory becomes indirect. According to J. Assmann, cultural memory feeds tradition and communication, thus providing mechanisms for explaining events involving conflict, innovation, and revolution.<sup>9</sup> This creates a cycle of non-communication, as the lack of communication between family members inhibits the family's own cultural memory, which in turn inhibits communication still further. Furthermore, while we generally believe that the dead live on in memory as a result of their own force and power, they can continue to do so only if we 'resuscitate' them, and continue to consider them members of our community and to carry them with us through the present.<sup>10</sup> By denying Medicus the memory of Wilhelm Crisolli, and keeping his grandfather unsaid and unseen, the family prevents this process of 'resuscitation' from taking place, in much the same way as many families with members who were involved in National Socialism. Medicus seeks to counteract this by resuscitating the memory of his grandfather himself. Medicus never knew his grandfather, but could have been introduced to him through familial communication, which would have allowed Crisolli to become integrated into Medicus' childhood memories. The absence of these memories becomes a memory in its own right; instead of remembering stories about his grandfather, Medicus remembers only silence and mystery.

Concealing the past of the war generation is not unique to Medicus' family, who felt the need to conceal Wilhelm Crisolli's past out of concern that he might have committed war crimes, and that his execution could have been an act of revenge. Despite these fears having been concealed from his generation, Medicus acknowledges that it is impossible to hide from one's own family history; 'von seiner Familie kann niemand davonlaufen. Man kann nur im Guten wie im Bösen mit ihr leben, viel mehr war nicht möglich'.<sup>11</sup> Medicus' attitude indicates a degree of acceptance: he recognises that denial of his family members, however controversial their actions may have been, is not something he is capable of.

Another aspect of the unsaid/unseen in *In den Augen meines Großvaters* connects to the distinction between the album and individual photographs, a topic on which the text offers a unique perspective. This is an area that I will return to shortly, but it is also relevant here. Although Medicus creates an album for his personal use, he does not reproduce it in the text. This leaves the reader

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<sup>8</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 19

<sup>9</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 2013 [1992]) p. 23

<sup>10</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 33

<sup>11</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 243

with only a description and a number of photographs placed at various points in the text, but without access to the resource that Medicus used to undertake his journey and write the text. Medicus dedicates a significant amount of the text to descriptions of the album and its preparation, and without it the reader is effectively blind. The reader is also denied insight into Medicus' rationale for the layout and organisation of the album, and so cannot comprehend the relationship of the photographs to one another, or to the viewer.

Having been confronted with detailed descriptions of the album while simultaneously being denied it, it seems strange that, on his first visit to Italy on his journey, Medicus 'forgets' the album, leaving it at home. Not only is the album unseen to the reader, but also to Medicus on his journey.

Bei meiner ersten Expedition ein halbes Jahr vorher hatte ich, als ob ich meinem Großvater noch eine Weile ausweichen wollte, meine sämtlichen Unterlagen zu Hause vergessen. Erst als ich in der Toskana angekommen war, merkte ich, daß die schwarzen Kartons fehlten, auf denen ich die Fotos hauptsächlich für den Zweck dieser Reise ebenso sorgfältig fixiert wie beschriftet hatte.<sup>12</sup>

That Medicus would forget such a vital part of his investigation suggests that he was subconsciously not prepared to embark on the next stage of discovery. It is also possible that the album was not forgotten at all, and that, in a moment of panic and fear, Medicus deliberately neglected to bring it. The realisation that Medicus has not brought the photographs is significant;

Meinen Wunsch, jeden dieser Orte aus der gleichen Perspektive zu fotografieren, wie er auf dem Fotomaterial meines Großvaters überliefert war, um nachträglich alle Veränderungen so genau als möglich zu registrieren, mußte ich aufgeben. Und obwohl alles, was ich auf dieser ersten toskanischen Expedition zu greifen gehofft hatte, zurückwich, ließ ich mich von meinem Vorhaben nicht abbringen. [...] Im übrigen bildete ich mir ein, ich könne mich auf mein Gedächtnis verlassen und würde mich an Ort und Stelle an alles erinnern, was die Fotos zeigten, die nutzlos zu Hause auf meinem Schreibtisch lagen.<sup>13</sup>

The narrator's inability to recreate and re-photograph the scenes depicted in his grandfather's photographs is a type of failed repetition. This also links to his being subconsciously unprepared to make the full journey, as he wishes to break the family cycle of death at age 49, and by breaking the photographic repetition chain he can, subconsciously, try and break the family cycle. This shows Medicus' subconscious playing a large part in his journey, as completing a second family album by

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<sup>12</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 80

<sup>13</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 80

re-photographing the original scenes would mean closely mimicking Crisolli, and in so doing playing his part in continuing the family cycle. By failing to do this due to forgetting the photographs on his journey, the chain is broken and Medicus is freed from the recurring family fate.

Not only does the reader not have access to Medicus' photo album, but by experiencing the writing of the first trip without the photographs the reader is displaced again as they must experience the journey through Medicus' memory of his album. This means the reader has no access to the 'reality' that the photographs could potentially provide, and as such that reality is undermined.

World War II remains unseen throughout much of the text. Medicus refers to it as the invisible war; 'ich wollte den auf meinen Fotos unsichtbaren Krieg sichtbar machen und herausfinden, ob der Kiefernwald ein camouflierter Garten oder der Garten ein gut getarnter Kiefernwald war. Ich mußte selbst nach Italien fahren'.<sup>14</sup> Medicus aims to counteract the war's invisibility through his presence at, and experience of, places depicted in the photographs that his grandfather visited when he was in Italy. The photographs themselves render the war visible, because they provide Medicus with the connection to the war, and his grandfather. This connection undermines the invisibility of the war that was in force during Medicus' childhood. The subject of invisibility is one that I will return to in Chapter 3 on Stephan Wackwitz's *Ein unsichtbares Land*.

The unsaid/unseen, particularly the withheld photograph album, feed into an interesting discussion on albums versus individual photographs, and counter-narratives.

### **Albums versus Individual Photographs**

As I have already mentioned, Medicus creates a photograph album but does not reproduce it in the text. He describes, in great detail, how he prepared and ordered the photographs; 'zunächst ging es darum, die Fotografien, die kein Datum trugen und nur lückenhaft beschriftet waren, in eine mir sinnvoll erscheinende Ordnung zu bringen'.<sup>15</sup> Medicus emphasizes that the arrangement of the photographs in the album makes sense to *him*; someone else may have placed them in a different sequence. The meticulous operation of arranging the photographs into an easily accessible form is described as follows:

Die Fotografien klebte ich auf schwarze, gelochte Kartons, die ich in einem Ordner abheftete. Thematisch gruppiert, würde ich die Kartons auf diese Weise später leicht in eine chronologische Ordnung bringen können. Dann übertrug ich die Legenden und schrieb sie mit einem weißen Stift unter die einzelnen Fotos. Jeder der Kartons war mit einem leicht

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<sup>14</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 69

<sup>15</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 55

marmorierten, knisternden Transparentpapier versehen, das die Fotos nicht nur schützte, sondern auch diskret verhüllte. [...] Sie erzählten die Geschichte vom Tod Wilhelm Crisolli.<sup>16</sup>

By withholding the album from the reader Medicus is also withholding ownership of Wilhelm Crisolli. Writing the text means sharing his grandfather with the reader, but by keeping the album for himself he can keep his reconstructed grandfather private, and thereby control any counter-narrative that the reader might formulate. Withholding the album is also a means of preventing the reader from giving his photographs alternative interpretations and thus of protecting Crisolli's memory from criticism.

This section is limited because the album, and its function, can only be speculated about. The circumstances surrounding the album produce counter-narratives, as does the act of withholding the album itself.

### Counter-narratives

Counter-narratives are created throughout the text by Medicus' decision not to include the photograph album and the unsaid/unseen. By withholding this information Medicus is attempting to prevent the reader from creating counter-narratives of their own, but by doing so another counter-narrative is created as the reader experiences the lack of the photograph album. While Medicus can control and preserve *his* counter-narrative in this way, the lack of an album gives the reader a greater capacity for speculation, and thus stimulates creation of further, more extensive counter-narratives. Had the photo album been included, alongside the text, the images would have determined and controlled the reader's conception of Crisolli, his surroundings, and his journey.

It was a family tradition rather than a verbal history that first inspired Medicus' interest in his grandfather's life. Traditionally, after the death of a relative, the deceased's possessions were passed down to the youngest generation. After the death of his grandmother Annemarie, Medicus was given several cases belonging to Wilhelm Crisolli; 'darin steckten Drucksachen, handbeschriebene Zettel, ein dickes Bündel alter Fotografien in kleinen Formaten mit mal gezackten, mal glatten Rändern sowie ein Notizbuch in schwarzem Einband'.<sup>17</sup> Initially Medicus hides the documents in his desk;

Manchmal holte ich sie hervor, um sie verstohlen zu betrachten. Ich verlor dabei nie das Gefühl, etwas Obszönes zu tun. Gelegentlich schlug ich auch das Notizbuch auf. Die Sütterlinschrift blieb für mich ein unlösbares Rätsel, die maschinengeschriebenen

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<sup>16</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 56

<sup>17</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 38-39

Dokumente langweilten mich, sie bestätigten ein um das andere Mal den 12. September 1944 als Todestag des Großvaters.<sup>18</sup>

The physical artefacts that Medicus receives support his connection to his grandfather that he feels in later life. They have an important function, because even though he refuses to look at the photographs for years, their presence alone is enough to make him to think of Crisolli. J. Assmann's criteria for powerful cultural memory are belatedly satisfied by Medicus' physical inheritance; the items provide a connection to the 'mythical' and 'sacred' memory of Crisolli who, because Medicus' childhood was filled with secrecy surrounding his grandfather, is effectively rendered mythic. Although the National Socialists were not the victors of World War II, they were a powerful occupying force, and this gives Medicus' items a connection to power. Finally, the mysterious circumstances surrounding Crisolli's death and the gap of a generation between him and Medicus mean that the act of remembering Crisolli is troubling for his grandson, and this in itself promotes cultural memory because the troubling nature of the memory cannot be forgotten.

The idea of counter-narratives can be closely associated with postmemory theory. Several aspects of postmemory can be seen in *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, mainly mediated through material culture, which is staged explicitly as a medium for postmemory in the text. Fuchs writes of postmemory that its engagement must be self-critical, or it might create exclusively 'nostalgic versions of history'. She notes that 'this is precisely the focal point of Medicus' metacritical engagement with photography as an appealing but highly problematic medium for memory work.'<sup>19</sup>

Given that Medicus grew up engulfed by a silence surrounding his grandfather's National Socialist involvement, and was therefore not 'dominated by narratives that preceded [his] birth',<sup>20</sup> it is quite possible that he had a sense of the power of family history while he was growing up despite being denied access to its details. The physical items that Medicus inherited from his grandfather go some way to compensating for this lack of verbal memory in that they provide him with information, written and sensory, that could create 'memories' in him. This alternative narrative of events articulates a key aspect of postmemory theory, namely that of creating powerful memories that are not the creator's own.

Medicus realises that photographs too have their flaws and are subjective; 'auf sie alleine konnte ich mich allerdings nicht verlassen. Ich würde mich an Militärarchive wenden und dort recherchieren müssen'.<sup>21</sup> This strategy bears a resemblance to Moritz Pfeiffer's strategy in *Mein*

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<sup>18</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 39

<sup>19</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 85

<sup>20</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative, and postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002 [1997]) p. 22

<sup>21</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 55



*Großvater im Krieg*, though it is put to a different use. Medicus' unwillingness to trust only in the photographs suggests he is aware of the possibility of alternative interpretations and narratives being created by them. As well as preventing the reader from re-interpreting them by not reproducing them in the text, Medicus is preventing himself from being blinded by countless narratives.

Medicus often treats the photographs as if they were alive. His interpretation of them is not finite; 'wieder und wieder nahm ich die Fotos zur Hand, und wieder und wieder entdeckte ich irgend etwas, was ich vorher übersehen hatte'.<sup>22</sup> The constant discovery of new meanings within the photographs is consistent with the idea that they are alive; they harbour a capacity for endless re-interpretation. This is confusing both for Medicus and for the reader who does not have access to all of the photographs or to Medicus' family background. The capacity for constant re-interpretation also points to a juxtaposition within the photographs, as they do not themselves physically alter, but meanings within them go from being unseen to obvious.

It is of further significance that Medicus constructs a covering for the photographs. Although the primary reason for this is to protect them, it can also be seen as a method of veiling, or shrouding, the last 'living' remnants of Medicus' grandfather. This might signify respect, but it also hides the photographs; Medicus does not need to look closely at them unless he specifically chooses to. Because he discovers something new every time he studies the photographs, the cover allows Medicus to protect himself from the negative impact of over-thinking, or from the strain of constantly reinterpreting the same images. Medicus also states that initially he would only take 'verstohlen' glances at the photographs, before quickly replacing them in his desk, because he always felt that he was doing something 'Obszönes'.<sup>23</sup> In this way they constitute another form of the unseen within the album, as Medicus has the opportunity to create other counter-narratives during the time that they are hidden. Such impact could amount to psychological trauma. By admitting that he discovers something new at every observation, Medicus is also implying that he will never discover everything there is to see in the photographs, or everything there is to know about his grandfather.

Traditionally photographs generally are seen as dead, unchanging items that outlive their subjects and act as reminders. The veiling of photographs is consistent with this, but by constantly finding new meaning within the photographs Medicus breathes life into them. Not only are the photographs alive, but Medicus' time capsule seems to be living too; 'im Herzen der Zeitkapsel waren die letzten sieben Lebensmonate meines Großvaters aufbewahrt'.<sup>24</sup> By using the word 'heart',

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<sup>22</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 55

<sup>23</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 39

<sup>24</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 58

Medicus extends the metaphor to imply that the time capsule has a living, beating character. Medicus is 'resuscitating' his grandfather by endowing the photographs and time capsule with a degree of vitality, which by writing the text, he is able to immortalize.

The written documents that he finds in the time capsule were not of much use to Medicus; 'es blieb mir nichts anderes übrig, als mich an die einundfünfzig Schwarzweiß-Fotografien zu halten, die zum Inhalt der Zeitkapsel gehörten. Sie waren meine wichtigsten Zeugnisse'.<sup>25</sup> Referring to the photographs as 'Zeugnisse' opens them to a variety of interpretations; 'testimony', 'evidence', 'proof', 'witness' etc. Photographs are often referred to as 'proof', but 'witness' reinforces the idea that the photographs are alive. Hirsch indicates that photographs are alive; she writes that one of the reasons why postmemory theory is so powerful is 'because photographs are often read as traces, material connections to a lost past, and because many photographic images have survived even though their subjects did not'.<sup>26</sup> Again, Medicus uses objects to keep his grandfather, and his grandfather's story, alive in a manner similar to the poet Shelley Savren, who often wrote of her family members. Savren explained that her paternal grandfather was murdered, and she told his story through her writing so that the story did not die with her grandfather.<sup>27</sup>

Fuchs extends the living photograph metaphor; 'according to the narrator, they jumped a few steps down into the garden and walked directly into the photograph' ('wir sprangen wenige Stufen hinauf in den Garten und liefen direkt in die Fotografie hinein' (AG 84)).<sup>28</sup> Medicus infers that the photograph is not only living and present, but that it can be adapted, interacted with, and even entered, an idea that flows throughout the text. Again, this reinforces the suggestion that Medicus is attempting to keep his grandfather alive. This is important to him because he never knew Crisolli, and did not even have the opportunity of getting to know him through his family's memories.

Mitchell further develops the idea of the living photography by suggesting that images are in fact interactive and have wishes and desires like any other living being. Despite knowing that photographs of our loved ones are not alive, we are reluctant to disrespect the material image.<sup>29</sup> He suggests that pictures want to be treated as the equals of language, without being turned into language themselves,<sup>30</sup> and that their wish is 'not to be interpreted, decoded, worshipped, smashed, exposed, or demystified by their beholders, or to enthrall their beholders. [Their wish] is simply to be

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<sup>25</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 55

<sup>26</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile', *Poetics Today*, 17 (1996), 659-86 (p. 659-60)

<sup>27</sup> Suzanne Roberts and Shelley Savren, 'Family Skeletons: Writing about the Living and the Dead', *Bridges*, 16 (2011), 214-20 (p. 216)

<sup>28</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 86

<sup>29</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 31

<sup>30</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, p. 47

asked what they want, with the understanding that the answer may well be, nothing at all.<sup>31</sup> By being treated as living objects the photographs and documents almost take on the role of characters in the text, functioning together as a kind of all-seeing, all-knowing narrator. As the reader has no access to this narrator, however, they must trust in what Medicus is 'told' by this narrator.

One photograph in particular resonates with Medicus:

Das Personal dieser intimen Gartenszene stellen Maak und mein Großvater. Gekleidet in einen kurzen weißen Uniformrock, lehnt Wilhelm Crisolli, ins Leere sinnierend, mit schlaffen Armen in dem einen der beiden Goldsessel. Immer wenn ich dieses Foto betrachtete, wurde mein Blick zuerst vom Stamm eines dicken Baumes angezogen, der sich hinter den breiten Schultern Maaks erhebt. Allein der knorrige Baumstamm vermittelt Dauerhaftigkeit, alles übrige ist flüchtig bis zur Unwirklichkeit.<sup>32</sup>

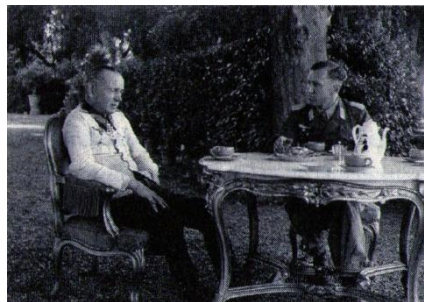


Fig. 1.7

It is interesting to note here that Medicus' eye is drawn directly to the tree trunk, rather than his grandfather, or indeed his grandfather's uniform. The tree is a rich symbol that denotes permanence, as it is still there when he visits the location, as well as his family heritage – a metaphorical, and literal, family tree.

Medicus writes that 'sosehr ich die Fotos früher gehaßt oder mißachtet hatte, sosehr schloß ich jetzt diese mir bukolisch erscheinende Gartenszene ins Herz. Vor allem die Melancholie ihrer lichtdurchfluteten träumerischen Unwirklichkeit wegen nannte ich die fotografische Impression das Rokoko-Foto'.<sup>33</sup> Naming the photograph encourages the thought that the photograph 'lives'. Medicus continues: 'das Rokoko-Foto war eine Kriegsphotografie, die den lauen Atemzügen eines schönen toskanischen Sommernachmittages Ewigkeit zu verleihen schien. [...] Wer hätte der Aura solch eines Bildes widerstehen können? Das Rokoko-Foto war das perfekte Erinnerungsbild'.<sup>34</sup> Fuchs comments that 'the grandson's overdetermined gaze turns the grandfather from a *Wehrmacht*

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, p. 48

<sup>32</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 67

<sup>33</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 68

<sup>34</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 68-69

general who is enmeshed in a bloody war against Italian partisans into an innocent inhabitant of Arcadia. The Rococo picture is the perfect memory icon precisely because it derealizes the war'.<sup>35</sup> Naming this photograph the 'Rokoko-Foto' creates juxtaposition; the rococo period contrasted sharply with the earlier baroque period in that it was less politically focused. Medicus contradicts this by connecting it with a photograph that depicts men in National Socialist uniforms.

As I have already mentioned, the old tree in the photograph represents permanence to Medicus. He describes the moment when he sees the tree with his own eyes for the first time;

Sein Stamm war unverändert. Um mich zu vergewissern, daß der Stamm wirklich da war, strich ich mit den Fingerspitzen über die Schraffur seiner Rinde. [...] Das Rokoko-Foto dokumentierte schwarz und weiß, daß der in den Anblick des Apenninpanoramas vertiefte Wilhelm Crisolli am selben Fleck gesessen hatte, an dem ich in diesem Augenblick saß. Ich zweifelte nicht daran, daß das Rokoko-Foto die Ikone bleiben würde, die es von Anfang an für mich gewesen war.<sup>36</sup>

Medicus writes of the difficulty of 'getting to know' his grandfather through the photographs.

Greifen konnte ich die uniformierte Gestalt, die mein Großvater war, dennoch nicht. Ich versuchte mich, ihm anzunähern, aber ihm in die Augen sehen konnte ich nicht. Nicht weil ich es nicht gewagt hätte, sondern weil er sich mir entzog. Weder er noch seine Begleiter blickten auch nur auf einem einzigen Foto den Betrachter an.<sup>37</sup>



Fig. 1.15

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<sup>35</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 86

<sup>36</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 84

<sup>37</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 61

Medicus' description of his grandfather as *uniformiert* emphasizes Crisolti's status as a member of a homogenous group of men, which makes him even more difficult to recognize and attempt to relate to. Other things become more obvious in the photographs; 'auf diesen Bildern schob sich etwas in den Vordergrund, was lange im Hintergrund geblieben war. Der überzeitliche moralische Geltungsanspruch, den mir die Traditionsgebundenheit dieser Männer vermittelte, berührte mich auf eine Weise, von der ich nicht für mich möglich gehalten hätte, daß er mich je würde erreichen können'.<sup>38</sup>

Medicus writes that it was particularly the photographs depicting men in National Socialist uniform that initially disturbed him and prevented him from exploring the family history.

Diese Fotos waren schuld daran, daß ich den ganzen ererbten Packen, sobald ich ihn aus seinem Versteck hervorgeholt, immer schnell beiseite gelegt oder nur angewidert durchgeblättert hatte. Die Breeches und Schaftstiefel der Offiziere stießen mich ebenso ab wie der Hitlergruß, der Führerkranz und die Hakenkreuzfahne. Die übrigen Fotos hatten mir nie viel gesagt. [...] Ich war fixiert auf den Hitlergruß, den Führerkreuz und die Hakenkreuzfahne.<sup>39</sup>

Medicus takes forward the idea that photographs are 'living' by placing blame on them. The photographic content is problematic for Medicus, but he does not initially see the full content of the photographs because of the symbols that remind him of National Socialism and his grandfather's involvement in it are so overwhelming; they overshadow the more familial details. I will discuss the topic of the normalization of National Socialist symbols in Chapter 2 on *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, where the normalization is made obvious even in civilian surroundings.

Medicus selects individual photographs and collections for particular exploration. His grandparents' engagement photograph is reproduced in the text and he writes that 'das offizielle Verlobungsfoto war im Stolper Wohnzimmer der Rosetzki aufgenommen worden. [...] Wie es sich auf seinem Verlobungsfoto präsentierte, hätte das Paar auch gut in das "physiognomische Zeitbild des deutschen Menschen" gepaßt, an dem der Fotograf August Sander schon vor dem Weltkrieg zu arbeiten begonnen hatte'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 63

<sup>39</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 57

<sup>40</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 136-37



Fig. 1.11

Medicus' statement could be interpreted to mean that the couple were relatively typical of the time; Sander's work is well-known, and his biggest project involved photographing a cross-section of 'normal' people during the Weimar Republic.<sup>41</sup> This supports Medicus' claim that his grandparents were 'normal' Germans of the time. This notion of typicality is something I will discuss further in Chapter 2.

Medicus specifically investigates a series of photographs that at first appear to be unconnected to the rest of the collection; 'unter den sechszwanzig Fotos, die nicht zu den Beerdigungsaufnahmen gehörten, gab es eine Serie von neun Aufnahmen, die mir sogleich durch ihre hohe bildästhetische wie technische Qualität aufgefallen war. Kein einziges dieser Fotos war beschriftet, kein einziges zeigte eine südliche Sommerlandschaft'.<sup>42</sup> After some thought Medicus assumes that the photographs were taken during the three-month period that his grandfather spent in Denmark in 1944 as part of the *Luftwaffe*. 'Die offenbar von einem professionellen Fotografen stammende Bildserie macht daraus einen glänzenden Auftritt. [...] Mehr als ein halbes Jahrhundert nach ihrer Entstehungszeit waren sie frisch wie am ersten Tag'.<sup>43</sup> While this writing is consistent with the vitality of the photographs, it also portrays the timeless aspects of the photographs; time has moved on, but the photographs remain the same, the subjects and landscapes frozen as they were then.

Medicus recognizes that not only the childhood memories surrounding his grandfather's generation, but also those surrounding his parents' generation, are important. He recounts a story of his mother Heidemarie taking possession of a stack of letters that Crisolli had sent to his wife during the war. Heidemarie found the letters while cleaning out Annemarie's possessions after her death, which occurred some forty years after that of Crisolli himself.

<sup>41</sup> August Sander, *August Sander* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1977) p. 7-8

<sup>42</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 60

<sup>43</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 60-61

Beim Leeren der Fächer und Schubladen fiel Heidemarie ein Packen Papier in die Hände. Wenige Blick genügten, und sie wußte Bescheid. Es waren Briefe aus den letzten Lebensmonaten ihres Vaters. Sie war verblüfft, daß der Generalmajor und sein italienischer Krieg mehr als vierzig Jahre im Sekretär ihrer Mutter überdauert hatten. Heidemarie ergriff die mit einem Band verschnürten Kuverts, rannte ins Bad und zündete über dem Waschbecken den ersten Brief an.<sup>44</sup>

Heidemarie's violent reaction to finding the letters is attributable to the unexpected nature of their discovery. The realization that Annemarie was in possession of Wilhelm Crisolli's letters but did not allow Heidemarie to see them, causes her anger and confusion, and she therefore begins to destroy the 'evidence', an act which is simultaneously a method of rejecting her newly-deceased mother, and distancing herself from her war-criminal father. It could also, however, signify an intention by Heidemarie to retain the Crisolli she knew, and not have this version contaminated by something negative which could be revealed in the letters.

To overcome the negative memories Medicus searches for positive stories and memories of his grandfather. Towards the end of the text Medicus describes visiting his mother's cousin 'Countess Johanna', 'die einzige Zeitzeugin, die an Wilhelm Crisolli eine lebendige Erinnerung besaß'.<sup>45</sup> The Countess recounts a particular memory of Wilhelm Crisolli, in which, at a party, one of her male friends had announced that he was joining the SS. Crisolli's reply was "'na, da sind Sie ja jetzt schon verloren'".<sup>46</sup> The Countess continues: 'Ich erzähle dir diese Anekdote, damit du dir, als sein Enkel, ein angemessenes Bild von ihm machen kannst'.<sup>47</sup> Like Moritz Pfeiffer's grandfather in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, Wilhelm Crisolli was in the *Wehrmacht*. Medicus implies the idea of the 'saubere Wehrmacht', but does not refer to it directly, unlike Pfeiffer who explores the idea specifically. I will return to this in Chapter 2.

The Countess recounts another tale:

Irgendwann während des Rußlandfeldzuges [...] da hat er einen Befehl, der ihm unsinnig erschien, nicht befolgt. Irgendwo bei Leningrad [...] sollte er eine Stellung, wie das bei Hitler immer hieß, "bis zum letzten Mann verteidigen". Das kam ihm massenmörderisch vor. Er wollte seine Leute nicht opfern. Deshalb führte er den Befehl nicht aus. Daraufhin wurde er nach Hause geschickt. Er durfte keine Uniform mehr tragen, und man hat ihm sogar eine

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<sup>44</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 157

<sup>45</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 209

<sup>46</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 213

<sup>47</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 213

Wache vor der Haustür gestellt. Er konnte nirgendwo hin, nicht einmal in die Garnison. Das ging wochenlang so.<sup>48</sup>

The Countess sees the importance of representing Crisolli positively to Medicus. Most of Medicus' previous discoveries are negative, but the one living 'eye-witness' shows Crisolli in a more positive light. Medicus writes that 'mich erstaunte, welche Vorbildfunktion mein Großvater für sie nach so langer Zeit noch immer besaß'.<sup>49</sup> Again, Medicus indirectly refers to an idea, this time that of the 'guter Nazi', without mentioning it directly. Alexandra Senfft deals with this topic extensively in *Schweigen tut weh*, and I will return to this in Chapter 4.

It is important for Medicus to include these experiences in the text because it gives the reader access to a perspective other than his own. By including them, Medicus is proving to the reader, as well as to himself, that his grandfather was not always the type of person that the reputation of a war criminal implies. As the only remaining family member to have seen this, the Countess' memories have great significance. However, Medicus appears not to take everything he is told by witnesses at face value:

Ich hatte mir Aufklärung verschaffen wollen, über meinen Großvater, meine Herkunft, über mich selbst. Ich hatte Zeitzeugen befragt, geriet dabei aber immer wieder in das Dilemma, ihren Aussagen nicht oder nicht mehr vollständig vertrauen zu können. Entweder lagen die Ereignisse für eine exakte Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg zu weit zurück oder die Dramatik der Ereignisse hatte die Erinnerungsfähigkeit eingeschränkt und nur eine lückenhafte Wahrnehmung erlaubt. Aus solchen Gründen, aber auch aus Mangel an handschriftlichem Quellenmaterial aus dem Besitz meines Großvaters waren die Fotografien, auf denen er zu sehen war, meine Hauptgedächtnisstütze.<sup>50</sup>

The counter-narratives that can be found in *In den Augen meines Großvaters* are created through a variety of methods, but they are all closely related to Medicus' family structure.

### Gender and Family Structure

Because Wilhelm Crisolli is Medicus' maternal grandfather the text neglects the paternal family, which creates a different dynamic than is commonly found in *Väter-* and *Enkelliteratur*; the tensions that traditionally exist between father and son do not exist here. There is little mention of Medicus' father in the text after the theory of repetition of death is explored, and when he is mentioned it

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<sup>48</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 213-14

<sup>49</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 214

<sup>50</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 244-45



appears to be an afterthought. Despite the lack of tension between them his father's influence is made prominent by his absence. This corresponds to the counter-narrative of the unsaid and unseen. Medicus writes that as a child he was surrounded by women:

Mutter, Großmutter, Großmutter, Halbschwester, Schwester, Kinderfrau, putzende, kochende, fegende Weiblein. Solange ich Kind war, umschwirrte mich eine hochbusige kleine Schar, die mich mit rot geschminkten Mündern verzauberte, mit blassen Lippen umsorgte und mit verstellten Stimmen lockte. Die äußere Welt hatte für mich den Wert, den sie im Traum besitzt. Nur die großen Mütter wußten, daß die Grenzwaldinsel ein Bollwerk war, hinter dem sich ein riesiges Arsenal an Vergangenheit verbarg. Der Vater hinterließ kaum Spuren. Sein weißer Landarzt Kittel war nicht mehr als ein pointillistisches Detail auf dem weiblich dominierten Gruppenporträt unseres frühen bundesdeutschen Familienidylls.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of his childhood surrounded predominantly by female family members, Medicus' text contains an aspect of feminized writing. One of the text's later chapters is entitled 'Der Krieg ist ein Roman, den die Frauen erzählen'.<sup>52</sup> This indicates that Medicus considers war a kind of story or tale that the women are left to tell as the men have gone into battle, died, or are incapable of narrating their experiences.

The paragraph in question begins: 'Mir blieb nichts übrig, als wenigstens zeitweise abzustreifen, was ich über Krieg, Militär und Wehrmacht im Kopf trug. Ich mußte den Mut aufbringen, zu meinen unbewußten Wissensspeichern vorzudringen'.<sup>53</sup> Medicus writes of a desire to strip away the layers in order to reach his subconscious. He continues 'dank dieses Entschlusses beunruhigte mich nicht mehr, daß ich nur wenige handschriftliche Dokumente meines Großvaters besaß. Die Fotografien wiesen mir Wege ins Unbekannte, die mir kein Buchstabe je hätte eröffnen können'.<sup>54</sup> Medicus realises the importance that the images have and the ability they have to unlock memories and stories. He moves onto the photographs' subjects; 'die Offiziere, die auf den Bildern zu sehen waren, strahlten zu meiner eigenen Verblüffung nicht allein negative Empfindungswerte aus. War ich etwa innerlich militarisiert?'.<sup>55</sup> Medicus becomes confused as to why the images of officers appear normal to him. This is another issue I will return to in Chapter 2. *In den Augen meines Großvaters* is a text made very specific to one family, while Pfeiffer's *Mein Großvater im Krieg* is made relatable to a wide range of readers.

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<sup>51</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 20

<sup>52</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 209

<sup>53</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 64

<sup>54</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 64

<sup>55</sup> *Augen meines Großvaters*, p. 64

### Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have shown that *In den Augen meines Großvaters* offers a rich layer of the unsaid/unseen from which a great number of counter-narratives can be constructed.

As I have shown, the familial silence and lack of communication during Medicus' childhood actually has the opposite effect to that which his family had intended, and bred curiosity in the young Medicus which resulted in the text. This affected the natural run of cultural memory, but in terms of postmemory, several aspects of the theory can be seen in this text. Exploring this text has shown that photographs aid memory and history, but the lack of them in this text inhibits the reader in their exploration. Despite Medicus being able to prevent alternative interpretations by withholding the photographs, different interpretations will be created through them being missing. The reader is also displaced by the withheld album, as they do not have the privilege of seeing the photographs themselves. In the withholding of the photographs Wilhelm Crisolli himself is withheld, and protected from alternative interpretations.

The exploration of this text also shows that treating photographs and documents as living objects is an effective memory tool for a family or individual, as well as an effective literary strategy. It also adds another layer to the family history.

*In den Augen meines Großvaters*, like most texts of its time, does not correspond to the *Väterliteratur* genre, as the conflict between generations does not exist (or is mediated), but it does fit into the *Enkelliteratur* genre as it is open to discovery.

Medicus does not explicitly write extensively about World War II in his text, though he does refer to the 'invisible war' himself. By not focussing on the War, the family history can be made more prominent in the text. This is a strategy that is the complete opposite of what is employed in the text Chapter 2 is concerned with, Moritz Pfeiffer's *Mein Großvater im Krieg*.

## Chapter 2

### **Moritz Pfeiffer: 'Mein Großvater im Krieg 1939-1945: Erinnerung und Fakten im Vergleich'**

This text is the product of the author's history studies at university. Curious about his maternal grandparents' lives during the National Socialist period, Pfeiffer conducted interviews with his grandfather, Hans Hermann, asking detailed questions about his involvement. Following the interviews Pfeiffer compared his grandfather's tales to official war records and family letters in an attempt to assess the accuracy of the claims that his grandfather made. Pfeiffer's grandmother Edith was not well enough to be interviewed so the text relies heavily on Hans Hermann's memories. Hans Hermann and Edith both passed away in 2006, before the text had been completed. As a result, Pfeiffer admits, some questions remain unanswered.

The interviews were conducted in a familial setting, and the transcripts provided the foundation for *Mein Großvater im Krieg*. Pfeiffer divides the text into nine 'chapters', the first eight of which deal with different phases in his grandfather's life; in the ninth, meanwhile, Pfeiffer turns his attention to his grandfather's brother Siegfried, and his National Socialist sympathies, including Siegfried's voluntary sign-up to the *Waffen SS*. Each chapter is divided into three sections: *Erinnerung* details Hermann's memories and the interviews, *Familienquellen* substantiates (or not, as the case may be) these memories through recourse to war records and letters, and *Analyse und Forschungsstand* contains Pfeiffer's analysis. The division of chapters into these categories allows the reader to distinguish clearly between memory (or what is not remembered), and historical fact. However, the division gives a disjointed feel to Pfeiffer's writing, which mimics the disjointed memories of Hans Hermann.

This definitive division of the narrative into history and memory suggests a certain distrust between Pfeiffer and his grandfather. By using physical records to prove, or to disprove, Hans Hermann's memories, rather than the reverse of this, Pfeiffer implies that history in the war records is fact, while memories are not. This implication instils distrust in the reader, who has no familial connection on which to base their relationship to Hans Hermann. However, as I mentioned in my introduction, it is memory, rather than historical fact, that is essential to the understanding of historical truth, because it provides the emotions that facts alone cannot.

### **The Unsaid/Unseen**

Pfeiffer's female family members, in particular his grandmother, are noticeably absent from the text (but not from his photograph album). In addition, Pfeiffer chooses to include a large number of

photographs in his album that are apparently unrelated to his family, while neglecting to include others that are.

The apparent absence of Pfeiffer's grandmother creates an interesting dynamic between the photographs and text as she is represented extensively through the photographs, but not in the writing. This is partly due to her illness at the time of interview; had she not been ill and died shortly after she might have played a more prominent role. However, she might have been neglected, whatever the circumstances, in an attempt to distance her from Hans Hermann and his National Socialist involvement. While Pfeiffer knows from the records that she worked for the Party, she was not involved to the same extent as Hans Hermann, although Pfeiffer suspects her beliefs and ideology might have been stronger. By ensuring that Edith is represented frequently in the photographic material that he includes in the text, Pfeiffer is able to compensate for the fact that he has not told her story.

Pfeiffer's decision to include a number of photographs that are not explicitly connected to his family is linked to his decision to undertake only limited analysis of the photographs that are included in the text. Each circumstance can be attributed to an unconscious or repressed desire to disprove, or to distance himself from, his grandfather's involvement in National Socialism. This claim may seem incongruous given that the text itself is a product of Pfeiffer's willingness to discuss openly his grandfather's life in National Socialist Germany. Just as Hans Hermann's memories could be inaccurate (as, in some cases, they prove to be), the war records, and even his grandparents' letters, could be equally unreliable, or even fake. A photograph depicting his grandfather, meanwhile, is much harder to dismiss. Because he refuses to deny that his grandfather was in the *Wehrmacht*, and his grandmother an enthusiastic supporter of the National Socialist Party, however, Pfeiffer is able to choose what he might prefer to conceal. Because Pfeiffer provides an open and frank account of the general circumstances surrounding his grandparents' involvement in National Socialism, smaller, but potentially more damaging, details can be concealed, for example Hans Hermann's actions and locations during World War II.

By including unconnected photographs Pfeiffer deflects the reader's attention away from his grandparents and their actions, and his decision not to write about them means that they initially appear to have been included as an afterthought. This generalization of his grandparents has two consequences; the criticism of the war generation is deflected onto multiple sets of grandparents, which goes some way to absolving Hermann and Edith as they were not the only ones involved in National Socialism. At the same time, it renders the text more applicable to other third generation Germans reading it; he is telling the story of the nation's grandparents. By reading about Pfeiffer's grandparents, they may come to understand their own grandparents better. The political

implications of this are far-reaching; by reading about the lives of others' grandparents, individuals stand to gain a better insight into history in general and into their own families in particular. This could lead to less family tension as members of the third generation may not feel the need to ask their grandparents questions about their role in the National Socialist past, and are equally likely to be more accepting of their silence on the subject. It could also lead to a sense that asking questions is more acceptable; if Pfeiffer can do this successfully, and can construct a text from the answers, other individuals can legitimately question their own grandparents. Another important implication, however, is that the blame and the responsibility are distributed across a larger demographic, and are therefore less easily attributable to individuals.

The inclusion of a significant number of unconnected photographs is not the result of a dearth of family photographs. On the contrary, Pfeiffer indicates that there is no shortage of these; 'Mehrere Bilder zeigen meinen Großvater in seiner Anfangszeit bei der Wehrmacht',<sup>1</sup> '[a]us der Zeit in Metz finden sich [...] zahlreiche Fotos, die meisten vom Hochzeitstag und dem "Tag der Wehrmacht"',<sup>2</sup> and that 'auf zahlreichen [...] Fotos ist mein Urgroßvater Wilhelm [...] zu sehen. [...] Ins Auge fallen bei der Betrachtung der Bilder aber auch viele weitere militärische Aufnahmen und Dokumente aus der Familie.'<sup>3</sup>

The unsaid/unseen is represented through the missing females, the unrelated photographs and lack of connected photographs. This strategy has the effect of concealing some areas of Pfeiffer's family history, and will be developed over the next two sections.

### **Albums versus Individual Photographs**

*Mein Großvater im Krieg* contains 24 pages of photographs. At first glance they seem typical of many family collections with a military background; images of Hans Hermann as a child (Fig. 2.5), as a young man in uniform (Fig. 2.1), a wedding photograph (Fig. 2.30), and one of Hans Hermann and Edith at the end of the 1990s (Fig. 2.46).

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<sup>1</sup> Moritz Pfeiffer, *Mein Großvater im Krieg 1939-1945: Erinnerung und Fakten im Vergleich* (Bremen: Donat, 2012) p. 55. Quotations from this text will be referenced 'Großvater im Krieg, page number' only.

<sup>2</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 125

<sup>3</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 34



*Großvater Hans-Hermann (links) mit Marlies und Paul-Gerhard, Ende der 1920er Jahre*

Fig. 2.5



*Großvater Hans Hermann als Angehöriger des Infanterieregiments 80, 1939*

Fig. 2.1



*Hochzeit von Edith und Hans Hermann in Metz, 1. Juli 1943*

Fig. 2.30

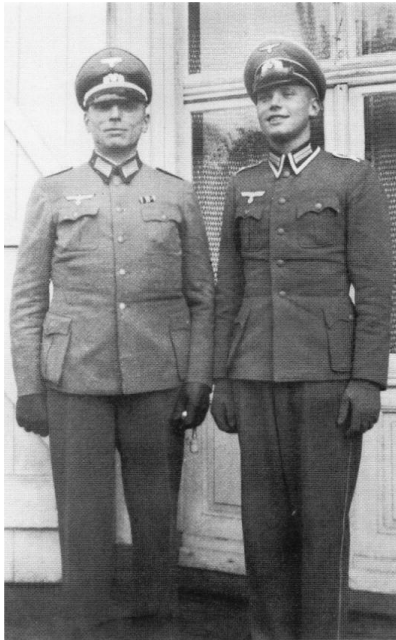


*Großeltern Ende der 1990er Jahre*

Fig. 2.46

The collection of photographs contains a wide range of different types, including military themed images (eg. Fig. 2.4), private family photos (eg. Fig. 2.7), scenes of militarization (eg. Fig. 2.10), scenes of war and devastation (eg. Fig. 2.18), propaganda (eg. Fig. 2.42).





Urgroßvater Wilhelm mit seinem Sohn Hans Hermann, 1940

Fig. 2.4



Großmutter Edith, 1936

Fig. 2.7



Vereidigungsfeier beim Infanterieregiment 80, Ende 1939/  
Anfang 1940

Fig. 2.10



Bergung einer Verletzten nach einem deutschen Luftangriff,  
31. Dezember 1940

Fig. 2.18



Propaganda gegen Kriegsmüdigkeit und Bolschewismus,  
1944/45

Fig. 2.42

Of the 46 photographs included, 18 have no obvious connection with Hans Hermann or Edith. Pfeiffer's choice to take up space with photographs that do not have a personal connection to his

grandparents warrants a closer examination. The image depicting 'Verwüstetes Londoner West End nach einem deutschen Luftangriff, 1940' (Fig. 2.17) is particularly anomalous given that neither Hans Hermann, nor his brother Siegfried, took part in the attacks on Britain.



*Verwüstetes Londoner West End nach einem deutschen Luftangriff, 1940*

Fig. 2.17

Furthermore, the photographs of war devastation were not taken by Pfeiffer's family, and were not found in his family collection. While Pfeiffer acknowledges this – he states in his references that the photographs and documents that were not in his family's possession come from Soviet and GDR archives, as well as his publishers – he does not clarify the origins of individual images. This blurs the lines between Pfeiffer's family and the German population; Pfeiffer is trying to tell the story of many other grandparents, as well as showing that it was not just *his* grandparents who were involved in National Socialism. It is equally unclear why examples of National Socialist propaganda are included; these appear irrelevant to Hans Hermann's story, but allow Pfeiffer to emphasize the typicality of his family and the way in which the country was indoctrinated. There are other photographs depicting devastation and destruction in National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union, some of which are directly connected with Hans Hermann and Siegfried. Here the relevance of their inclusion is clearer, because they are connected directly to the areas that Hans Hermann and Siegfried found themselves stationed in during the War.

Much of the text is based on Pfeiffer's notion of his family being typical, or average, but his realization that his family has long had a high opinion of the military ('Die vielen Dokumente und Aufnahmen belegen, dass das Militär in der Familie schon über mehrere Jahre und Generationen hinweg einen hohen Stellenwert einnahm.')

<sup>4</sup> develops his claim of typicality, which I will return to in the section below on gender and family structure. The family's attitude toward the military, however, explains why Hans Hermann's brother Siegfried voluntarily joined the SS.

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<sup>4</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 34-35



Pfeiffer's selection of photographs also contradicts his grandfather's claim that the *Wehrmacht* was, as has been often stated, a 'saubere Wehrmacht'.<sup>5</sup> Those responsible for the chaos and devastation depicted in the photographs are not named, but there is a suggestion that Pfeiffer is surreptitiously contradicting his grandfather's claims by including photos of devastation in a text primarily concerned with an officer of the *Wehrmacht*, supposedly the 'righteous' arm of the National Socialist military.

The controversial 1995 exhibition '*Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*', which I mentioned in the introduction, was a collection of documents and photographs, many of which were taken by soldiers, and contradicted the claim of the 'saubere Wehrmacht' on a much larger scale. The exhibition seemed to prove what the majority of Germany did not believe: that the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* had been just as involved in the atrocities as the *SS* and *Gestapo* etc. Many Germans had believed in the 'two-war' theory, according to which the *Wehrmacht* had fought a 'decent, honourable war' in contrast to the war *SS* had waged behind the front line; 'this theory was one of the essential exculpatory pillars in post-war understandings of the *Wehrmacht*. It made it possible to conceive of the Second World War in terms of "them" (chiefly the *SS* and *SD*) and the "ordinary soldier"'.<sup>6</sup> It was the first time that this evidence was opened to the public, 'and it called into question not only the individual recollection of former soldiers but according to [exhibition director] Hannes Heer the collective memory of an entire generation'.<sup>7</sup>

The exhibition's creators came to an important realization; Bill Niven notes that 'when Hannes Heer began his [exhibition] research he had regarded pictures not as unequivocal evidence, but, like his fellow historians, as "supplementary source material", and as illustrations to support historical documents. But as the exhibition toured Germany and Austria, it became clear that its power lay with the pictures'.<sup>8</sup> This reinforces the idea that underpins Pfeiffer's division of his chapters – that memory alone is not fact, and that 'supplementary materials' are required in order to substantiate it.

There were objections to the exhibition, and it was reopened in 2001 under the name '*Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Dimensionen des Vernichtungskriegs 1941-1944*'. The new exhibition did not engage with the question of how the crimes could have been committed. Instead, the Holocaust was portrayed as 'one of six sections on Nazi war crimes', and the *Wehrmacht* itself was not portrayed as having played a prominent role.<sup>9</sup> The public reaction to the exhibition public proves

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<sup>5</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 56

<sup>6</sup> Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 147

<sup>7</sup> Janina Struk, *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War* (London: I.B. Tauris: 2011) p. 89-90

<sup>8</sup> Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 95

<sup>9</sup> Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 107

how important albums are to the construction of narratives; the exhibition was, in some ways, a very large photograph 'album'. The photographs contained within it disproved the ideas and beliefs of a large number of people, and, in much the same way as Pfeiffer's album, provided a narrative that ran counter to what they believed.

The layout of the photographs in Pfeiffer's text merits further investigation. Rather than being spread throughout the text, the photographs are collated in an 'album' in the middle of the volume. This changes the way we 'read' the images. In an album, photographs are organized to tell stories, which 'bring order and meaning to selected memory and random moment captured by the camera, although stories in an album are never complete. [It] can be a way of [...] remembering an experience'.<sup>10</sup> By collating the images, Pfeiffer allows the reader to view and interpret the photographs in connection with each other, rather than individually and relative to their position in the text. However, an album does not necessarily have to be structured chronologically, as is shown by Pfeiffer's, as well as Medicus', albums. Struk relates her personal experience with an album belonging to her uncle, Cecil Ripley, a sailor in the Royal Navy during World War II. As an old man he showed her his collection of war photographs. The experience was a strange one for her. She found that the stories in the albums were 'idiosyncratic, and meandering and fragmented rather than linear.' Not only did the albums include photos of happy moments, but images of aeroplanes in formation, dead soldiers, and collapsed buildings. She wondered how many former soldiers had albums of this sort. 'The disconcerting juxtaposition of a scenic tropical paradise, my uncle as a young, handsome sailor and unidentified corpses distorted what I thought a personal photo album was supposed to show. Family albums are meant to reassure and comfort, not to disturb.' When she asked her uncle why these pictures were in the albums, he replied "'because [...] they show the reality of war'", but the images themselves were not of places he had been, or of people he knew. Struk writes that 'it became apparent that the stories he told often had little to do with the images showed. [...] It was as though the image in the album acted merely as a way of accessing the past.'<sup>11</sup> In the same way, Pfeiffer's album offers an opportunity to access the past and what is captured in the photographs.

The aforementioned lack of a linear structure is replicated in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*. We might expect the album to be in chronological order; in fact, this is only true of the final two images. Otherwise the placement of the photographs is relatively random, and this is made more obvious by Pfeiffer's inclusion of dates in the captions.

The lack of chronological structure would make sense if the photographs were organized according to a different rationale, for example by subject matter. This, however, is not the case.

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<sup>10</sup> Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 51-52

<sup>11</sup> Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 49-51

Photographs from the family's private album are mixed with archive photographs of militarization, war, and devastation.

By choosing to collate the photographs in an album, rather than disperse them throughout the text, Pfeiffer forces the reader to relate the images to one another. He tries to overwhelm the reader with photographic 'evidence', and to create a 'story within a story'; the images of devastation thus add a new literary 'layer' to the text, despite their apparently random inclusion. This supports my earlier claim that Pfeiffer is telling the story of many grandparents.

It must be remembered that Pfeiffer intended the photographs to be displayed in the way that they are. While they may appear random to the reader, they must have made sense in this order to Pfeiffer. The order confuses the reader, and this circumstance reinforces the claim that *Mein Großvater im Krieg* is intended to be a chronicle of many grandparents – the confusion surrounding the photographs creates distance between Hans Hermann and Edith on the one hand and the reader on the other, but does allow Pfeiffer to see his grandparents a part of the wider context of National Socialist Germany.

The discussion of the individual photos versus albums is based on the inclusion of so many random photographs, as well as their layout. This has the effect of de-personalizing the text and making it relatable to a much larger number of people and their families. This has the potential for strong counter-narratives to be created by the author and readers.

### **Counter-narratives**

Because of the depth of the unsaid/unseen in this text, the counter-narratives uncover a lot of material. The reader has no reason to disbelieve any claim made by Pfeiffer, or by Hans Hermann, nor is there any indication that the events described in *Mein Großvater im Krieg* are inaccurate. Assuming they are genuine, his grandparents' letters, as well as the Prisoner of War document, provide more evidence that Hans Hermann and Edith 'took part' in World War II. The inclusion of this material is also a method of stating, albeit subtly, that although the National Socialists inflicted great devastation on their enemies, the German population also suffered (though in a very different way). This is especially the case with regard to the Prisoner of War document. There are two photographs in the text that resonate with this; one depicting a wounded German soldier on a cart, and the bombed-out remains the furniture shop owned by Pfeiffer's grandfather, which renders the devastation more personal.

I have already mentioned the incongruous image of devastated London (Fig. 2.17), much like the material discussed above, its presence constitutes a method of telling a balanced story. The majority of Pfeiffer's text is obviously based on the history of a family involved in National Socialism and Hans

Hermann's participation in the military campaign, but by including photographs depicting the devastation that the National Socialists inflicted on other countries, Pfeiffer provides a more balanced account of World War II in general. By doing so he is able to avoid any accusations of bias, or of having depicted the Germans as the victims in the broader global context of World War II. Nine photographs depicting the devastation caused by the National Socialists are included in Pfeiffer's family album, and are a method of neutralizing the text.

German victimhood is understandably an area of great delicacy. Given the extent of the suffering that the National Socialists inflicted, the concept of Germans as victims has been researched only relatively recently. Initially, there was a concern that any discussion of German victimhood would equate German suffering with that of those who had suffered at the hands of the National Socialists.<sup>12</sup> The acknowledgement that Germans also suffered became a method of national atonement,<sup>13</sup> but in dealing with the past Germans were not morally obligated to break their silence; instead, it became acceptable to acknowledge that, during and in the aftermath of National Socialism, some were victims, some were perpetrators, and some were both.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the photos of Nazi devastation, some photographs show the glorification of the Party, such as Fig. 2.16.



*Blumen streuende Krankenschwestern und BDM-Mädel in Berlins Straßen anlässlich der Rückkehr Adolf Hitlers nach dem Sieg über Frankreich, 1940*

Fig. 2.16

There is a prominent military presence in Pfeiffer's photographic collection; Germany was, after all, heavily militarized at the time the photographs were taken, and military symbols were part of everyday life. In the majority of photographs the military aspect is relatively casual; only in Fig. 2.4

<sup>12</sup> Robert G. Moeller, 'The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimisation in East and West Germany', in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. by Bill Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) pp. 26-42 (p. 26-27)

<sup>13</sup> Moeller, 'The Politics of the Past in the 1950s', p. 37

<sup>14</sup> Moeller, 'The Politics of the Past in the 1950s', p. 42

and Fig. 2.10 are the men in uniform standing to attention or giving a military salute. In the other military photos the subjects are standing around casually, sometimes smiling. Even Fig. 2.6, which depicts Hans Hermann and his brother in their *Jungvolk* uniforms, carries a more sinister political and military connotation; the *Jungvolk* fed into the infamous *Hitlerjugend*, regarded as an organization that indoctrinated impressionable young minds into the ideologies of National Socialism.



*Die Brüder Hans Hermann (rechts) und Siegfried, Mitte der 1930er Jahre*

Fig. 2.6

In contrast to the photos of Hans Hermann, almost all of which depict him in uniform, the photos of Edith show her in civilian clothing. This is not unexpected, as she was not a member of the military, but presents an interesting juxtaposition given that Pfeiffer on several occasions describes Edith as a staunch believer in National Socialism, and the fact that at one point she worked in the offices of the *NSDAP*. Fig. 2.8 however provides an interesting angle on the normality of Nazi militarization in Germany. The photograph shows Edith among a group of friends, most of them dressed in swimming costumes, relaxing on the beach in 1935; an ordinary holiday image.



*Großmutter Edith (3. von links) im Kreise von Freundinnen und Freunden während eines Urlaubs auf Wangerooge, Juli 1935*

Fig. 2.8

What makes this photograph stand out is the presence in the background of flags bearing the swastika. The presence of such a blatant nationalistic political symbol on what appears to be a pleasure beach, and the fact that the flags are shown clearly in a photograph depicting smiling civilians shows just how desensitized the average German had become to the impending militarization and the National Socialist mindset. Photographs prompt the 'double question of comprehension: how were they understood at the time and how should they be understood today?'<sup>15</sup> While this photograph on the beach may not have been anything out of the ordinary at the time, the National Socialist symbols in the background stand out to today's viewer. This is because in the present there is much more awareness of the surrounding environment and its political connotations. In an age of political freedom and correctness it is difficult to imagine a beach being covered with flags symbolizing a dictatorial power.

Another such photograph (Fig. 2.28) depicts Hans Hermann and Edith on holiday in 1942. The image shows the couple relaxing in the sun. What gives this photo its military connotation is the epaulette just visible on Hans Hermann's right shoulder. Whether he was required to, or chose to, wear his military clothing while on holiday with Edith is irrelevant; the fact that the uniform is being worn in what appears to be a civilian context again indicates that the German population was largely

<sup>15</sup> Trachtenberg, 1989, cited in Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) p. 9-10

desensitized to the overwhelming military presence. This photograph is also evidence of everyday life continuing through wartime, and proof that National Socialists were normal people who fell in love and experienced many aspects of life.



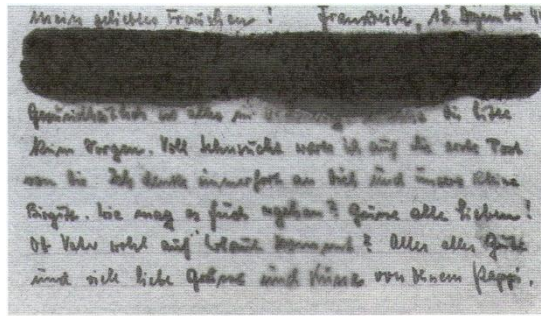
*Großeltern Edith und Hans  
Hermann im Urlaub, Juni 1942*

Fig. 2.28

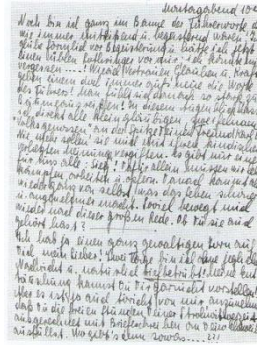
The only recent photograph, Fig. 2.46 (shown on page 46 of this thesis), depicts Hans Hermann and Edith in the 1990s, when they would have been in their seventies. The inclusion of this photograph seems to serve solely to prove to the reader that the protagonists of Pfeiffer's text actually existed. It may also be included for Pfeiffer's own benefit, as a method of proving to himself that his grandparents survived the war and went on to be citizens of a democratic Germany despite their pasts. It also reaffirms the separation by subsequent generations of 'Nazis' and 'Germans'. Depicting Hans Hermann and Edith in their old age, separated from National Socialism by over half a century, proves that they *used* to be National Socialists; though their later personal ideologies are unknown, they are not outwardly National Socialists anymore. It is also a means of portraying Pfeiffer's grandparents as he knew them, rather than the younger protagonists of the text.

Pfeiffer's inclusion of letters and documents (Figs. 2.35, 2.36, 2.40) again seems to constitute proof, as much to Pfeiffer himself as to the reader, while the inclusion of propaganda adds another perspective to Pfeiffer's album.





Brief von Hans Hermann an seine Frau aus der Kriegsgefangenschaft mit von der Zensur geschwärzten und unleserlich gemachten Passagen, Dezember 1944



Brief von Großmutter Edith an ihren Mann, 8. November 1943

Fig. 2.35

Fig. 2.36

Deutsch schreiben! Druckchrift erwünscht!		Write clearly and in printed letters!	
Vorname-Surname	Name—first name		
Date of birth	10.5.1921	Place of birth	Huppertal, Rheinl.
Geurtsdatum		Geurtsort	
Rang	Oberleutnant	Militärische Einstellung	Heer
Dienstgrad			
Army No.	3/J.E.B.N. 80/28	Last civilian residence	Huppertal
Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke		Letzter ziviler Wohnort	
Family's address	Frau Edith K. (12) Hahnenfichte/Kommune		
Familienanschrift	Villa Hausschick (Dachau, Land)		
Coming from (Camp No., Hospital No., etc.)			
Kosme von (Lager Nr., Lazarett Nr., usw.)			
Disposition:	unwounded	slightly wounded	severely wounded
In Gefangenschaft geraten:	nicht verwundet	leicht verwundet	schwer verwundet
Am well:	Am: recovered	convalescing	
Befinde mich wohl:	Bis: geheilt	In Heilung	
Present address:	P. O. W. No.	Camp No.	
Gegenwärtige Anschrift:	Gefangenen Nr.	Lager Nr.	
Locality:		Signature	
Ort:	Datum	Unterschrift	
	26. 11. 44		

Gefangenenermeldung meines Großvaters an seine Frau, 26. November 1944

Fig. 2.40

One example, Fig. 2.44, is a photograph, but it is not specified whether or not this is from the family's private collection. The other two examples, Fig. 2.42 (reproduced on page 47 of this thesis) and Fig. 2.43, appear to be documents Pfeiffer that has found, and that have no personal connection to his story.



Parole zum Durchhalten, 1945

Fig. 2.44



Plakat gegen die Verbreitung von „Gerüchten“, etwa 1944

Fig. 2.43

The National Socialists used photographs of demonstrations of power, as demonstrated in Fig. 2.16 (reproduced on page 52, to present a positive image to the German population, while for following generations the period is characterized by images of atrocities committed by the Nazis. These two contrasting perceptions are seen as unconnected in the present; 'it is little wonder,



therefore, that these two sides of the National Socialist state – the splendour of its façade and its superficial appeal, and the repellent horror of its violent crimes – are still repeatedly played off against one another.’<sup>16</sup> Pfeiffer’s selection of photographs demonstrates these two aspects of the National Socialist state. The impact of such images has changed our perceptions and causes us to see them from a different angle, but now they horrify us because we recognize ‘the two faces of the Third Reich, the simultaneity of an extraordinarily shaping and destructive power.’<sup>17</sup>

Such a rich text offers plenty for discussion in terms of the aspects of postmemory with which it engages.

In terms of postmemory ‘by choice’, Pfeiffer might well ‘choose’ to adopt memories that in fact were his grandfather’s. His grandfather’s experience of being wounded on the Eastern front would seem an obvious example of this, as perhaps is his brief experience behind enemy lines. Pfeiffer quotes Hans Hermann: “‘Ich war plötzlich ganz alleine hinter der russischen Linie. Ich hab mich dann vorgeschlichen, ganz alleine, wieder zurück. [...] Ich hatte in der rechten Hand die Pistole: Wenn mich ein Russe erwischt hätte, dann hätte ich mich eher erschossen, als dass ich in Gefangenschaft gegangen wäre’”.<sup>18</sup> While the reconstruction of family memory occurs through Pfeiffer’s relationship with the photographs, the identification with the family trauma was not allowed to take place due to the silence and generational distance.

As I have already mentioned, applying postmemory to the descendants of perpetrators is fraught with ethical and political problems. Similarly to Medicus, it is difficult to see how the theory as a whole might be applied to the descendants of perpetrators whose grandparents’ involvement and experience under National Socialist rule was ignored (whether by the grandparents, children, or grandchildren). If the war generation was not open about their experiences then their descendants cannot have ‘[grown] up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth’, and so their own experiences cannot be ‘evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated’.<sup>19</sup> The second and third generations’ childhoods, however, could have been dominated by silence, which creates a narrative, or a counter-narrative, of its own. The silence cannot be ignored, regardless of whether its precise cause is known or not, and, like Medicus, they could have grown up always ‘knowing’ that their family histories contained such occurrences.

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Reichel, ‘Images of the National Socialist State: Images of power, power of images’, in *German Photography 1870-1970: Power of a Medium*, ed. by Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas, trans. by P. Cumbers and I. Flett (Cologne: Dumont, 1997) pp. 68-82 (p. 68)

<sup>17</sup> Reichel, ‘Images of the National Socialist State’, p. 81

<sup>18</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 86

<sup>19</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative, and postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002 [1997]) p. 22

By interviewing his grandfather and hearing about Hans Hermann's experiences through his own words, with supporting evidence from the photographs and war records, Pfeiffer could begin to consider his grandfather's memories as his own, because in fact the re-telling of them *is* part of his own memory. This causes Pfeiffer to construct postmemory through the text.

Pfeiffer recognizes that the new information about his grandfather's involvement does not affect him; he quotes Margarete Mitscherlich, who claims that 'es ist ein uraltes Bedürfnis des Menschen zu erfahren, woher er kommt. Und es ist ungemein bitter, erkennen zu müssen: Der da ist mein Vater [oder Großvater, d. Verf.], ich verdanke ihm mein Leben, biologisch steckt viel von ihm in mir – also trage ich dieses Nazi-Unwesen auch in mir'.<sup>20</sup> Recognizing the 'Nazi-Unwesen' is a step towards 'mastering' the past, though whether or not this is possible, especially when the past is a National Socialist one, is a topic of much debate.

Mastering the past is not a process that leads to reconciliation with Nazi crimes but rather a process of learning how to live with the realization that Nazi crimes are part of your history and identity, and nothing in a sense, can reconcile you to them. At the same time, the idea of mastering the past is so open-ended that no matter how German society confronts it, there can always be people who say this is not enough. [...] It is not that we talk about the Holocaust because the past has not been mastered, but that we talk about it because it is in the process of being internalized as a mainstay of German identity, a past that will not go away because it should not go away.<sup>21</sup>

There are a number of reasons why the grandchildren of the war generation (the third generation) are able to look further into the details of life under National Socialism than their parents were. The immense amount of information available now means that those who are curious do not have to rely on their families' memories, but have access to many other resources. In fact, Pfeiffer mentions a study which found that witness accounts are ranked behind television and other media in terms of where information is sought.<sup>22</sup> War records enable Pfeiffer to discover facts that 'der Großvater entweder nicht mehr erinnern konnte oder aber nicht mehr erinnern wollte'.<sup>23</sup> This statement calls into question the actual openness of Hans Hermann, and suggests that perhaps he was 'selectively' open. Van der Kolk and van der Hart claim that 'memories easily become inaccurate when new ideas and pieces of information are constantly combined with old knowledge to form

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<sup>20</sup> Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, 1983 [1977], cited in *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 20

<sup>21</sup> Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche, *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002) p. 11-13

<sup>22</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 19

<sup>23</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 9

flexible mental schemas'.<sup>24</sup> Whether he had consciously 'selected' memories to 'keep' or not will never be known; the traumatic nature of his experiences could have wiped them from his conscious memory, or he could simply be withholding information he could not, or did not wish to, impart to his grandson. Here we must be wary of being drawn into a comparison between the experience of the victim and the experience of the perpetrator, which is not the subject of this research.

Not only are the facts more accessible now, but, as Pfeiffer's academic supervisor Dr. Wolfram Wette claims, the war generation may be more willing to talk of their experiences now, as the third generation is not as accusing as the second; 'Die Sehnsucht der Alten, nicht als Täter angesehen zu werden, [...] wird von den Enkeln leichter erfüllt als von den Kriegskindern'.<sup>25</sup> This corresponds with the latency that is evident in this text as well as the three others discussed in this thesis. This does not mean, however, that the grandchildren's questions are never met with a reaction; Wette writes:

Vielfach haben Angehörige der Kriegsgeneration den Jüngeren die ebenso populäre wie irritierende Frage gestellt: Und wie hättest du dich verhalten? Womit der Ältere indirekt – und mit warnendem Unterton – sagen wollte: Hüte dich vor vorschnellen moralischen Urteilen über unser damaliges Verhalten. Denn es wäre doch nicht auszuschließen, dass du dich in der gleichen Lage ebenso verhalten hättest wie wir seinerzeit.<sup>26</sup>

Nor does it mean that the war generation is willingly more open unless specifically asked; Pfeiffer writes of '[ein] erstaunliche[s] Erkenntnis: Offenbar wird in den Familien selber sehr wenig über den Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust gesprochen und diskutiert'.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that the war generation might be unwilling to talk about their experiences under National Socialism is not necessarily attributable exclusively to their being ashamed at their own involvement, but also perhaps to a feeling of being unable to communicate what they witnessed because it is too distressing. Pfeiffer cites Hans-Joachim Schröder's findings from interviewing members of the war generation: '[Er beobachtete] dass "es immer nur wenige kurze Sätze [sind], in denen die Gewalt des Krieges auf sinnlich fassbare, unmittelbar betroffen machende Weise sichtbar wird"'.<sup>28</sup> Pfeiffer then applies this to his grandfather's interviews:

Der Grund dafür liegt aber nicht an mangelnder Gedächtnisleistung oder Erinnerungsfähigkeit meines Großvaters, sind doch seine Beschreibungen ansonsten

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<sup>24</sup> Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) pp. 158-82 (p. 171)

<sup>25</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 8

<sup>26</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 11

<sup>27</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 19

<sup>28</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 65

detailliert und genau. Zahlreiche Informationen [...] beweisen, wie gut sein Gedächtnis funktionierte. [...] Dass er sich ausgerechnet an Kriegseinsätze und Fronterfahrungen aufgrund einer schlechten Gedächtnisleistung nicht erinnert, ist kaum anzunehmen. Folglich legt das zögerliche Berichten bzw. völlige Verschweigen von Kampfhandlungen die Vermutung nahe, dass diese Geschehnisse viel eher nicht *erzählbar* als nicht *erinnerbar* sind.<sup>29</sup>

The point at which Hans Hermann discusses the battle at Charkow is significant; 'Angesichts der Schlacht von Charkow durchbrach mein Großvater dann erstmals sein Schweigen, indem er von dem Erlebnis hinter den feindlichen Linien berichtete. Auch die genaue Archivierung und Erinnerung an die Schlacht offenbaren, dass die schweren Kämpfe sich ihm eingebrannt haben'.<sup>30</sup> This image of memories being 'burned' into the mind is consistent with much of the extensive research conducted into trauma, of which silence is a common symptom. Traumatic experiences that cannot be organised or expressed linguistically are often expressed in vivid, literal dreams.<sup>31</sup> Hans Hermann's dreams are not mentioned in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, but his silence is consistent with the symptoms of trauma.

The counter-narratives in *Mein Großvater im Krieg* are created through the significant inclusion of unrelated photographs, as well as the normalization of National Socialist symbolism. As in the previous two sections this strategy allows Pfeiffer's family history to resonate more clearly with the German population. The typicality that this suggests is explored in the following section.

### Gender and Family Structure

I have already mentioned the missing female family members in the text, and explored how this creates counter-narratives. Pfeiffer also constantly reminds the reader of his family's supposed typicality among German families during the National Socialist era.

In the book's Foreword, Pfeiffer's supervisor, Dr. Wolfram Wette, writes: 'Es ist nicht gerade alltäglich, dass ein Enkel im Rahmen seines Studiums der Geschichtswissenschaft eine Magisterarbeit über die Rolle seiner eigenen Großeltern im Zweiten Weltkrieg schreibt. Vielleicht handelt es sich sogar um den ersten Versuch dieser Art'.<sup>32</sup> Pfeiffer claims that his family is a 'durchaus typisch[e] deutsch[e] Familie'.<sup>33</sup> Admittedly this is his own opinion, and the actual

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<sup>29</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 65

<sup>30</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 92

<sup>31</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Jenseits des Lustprinzips', in *Studienausgabe*, vol. 3, ed. by Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2010 [1920]) pp. 213-72 (p. 222-23). For more discussion see eg. van der Kolk and van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past', p. 172

<sup>32</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 7

<sup>33</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 30

typicality of his family is questionable. Pfeiffer's interest in events during National Socialism became prominent during his time at university, and he writes:

Im Familienverbund ist immer viel diskutiert, analysiert, politisiert worden. Meine Großeltern lernte ich als offene Menschen kennen, die viel über ihre Erlebnisse im Dritten Reich und in ihrer Heimatstadt Wuppertal berichteten. So stellte es keineswegs ein Geheimnis dar, dass meine Großmutter Edith als "Jungmädelführerin" beim "Bund Deutscher Mädel" einen "Stamm" von immerhin etwa 1000 Mädchen befehligte. Ebenso offen sprach man darüber, dass mein Großvater Hans Hermann Berufsoffizier werden wollte und eine militärische Karriere begann, die ihn als Fahnenjunker ins gerade okkupierte Polen und in den "Feldzug" gegen Frankreich, als Leutnant in das "Unternehmen Barbarossa", also den Überfall auf die Sowjetunion, und also Oberleutnant wieder in das besetzte Frankreich führte. Es ist auch nie verschwiegen worden, dass sich mein Großonkel Siegfried, der Bruder meines Großvaters, mit siebzehn Jahren freiwillig zur Waffen-SS gemeldet hat.<sup>34</sup>

However, even if Hans Hermann was more open than most, his experiences and those of his wife during the National Socialist period are made to appear relatively typical through the construction of the text, with the anomaly of his brother's voluntary admission to the *Waffen-SS*. Pfeiffer himself expresses surprise at '[w]ie viel von den Strukturen, Mechanismen und Begebenheiten der NS-Geschichte zwischen 1933 und 1945 sich bereits einer durchschnittlichen Familienhistorie entnehmen lassen und in ihr erkennbar sind'.<sup>35</sup> This notion of typicality is supported by the Pfeiffer's choice of photographs. The first photograph in his collection depicts Hans Hermann, in uniform, at the start of his time in the military, and looks very much as one would expect a young soldier to: fresh-faced, cropped hair, and a spotless uniform. The family's typicality also amplifies the resonance of the text, so that Pfeiffer's family history can stand as representative for the descendants of the perpetrator collective. This strategy is supported by the inclusion of the unrelated photographs in the album. In contrast to Medicus' *In den Augen meines Großvaters* this text seeks to extend its resonance beyond a single family, while Medicus' text leaves no option for this.

Despite the increasing amount of new information and evidence open to the third generation, Pfeiffer mentions that they are still reluctant to connect the National Socialist past with their grandparents,<sup>36</sup> citing evidence from Harald Welzer's study, which I mentioned in my introduction.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 22

<sup>35</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 30

<sup>36</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 18-19

<sup>37</sup> Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, *"Opa war kein Nazi": Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2003 [2002]) p. 246

Pfeiffer states very matter-of-factly states that National Socialism *is* part of his own family history, and many others'.

Nationalsozialismus, Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust sind Familiengeschichte. [...] Der Nationalsozialismus war keine abstrakte Erscheinung, kein Phänomen weitab der eigenen Lebenswirklichkeit, sondern Alltag und Realität für Millionen Deutsche und somit für Millionen von Großeltern und Eltern. Gleichwohl jedoch scheint die nahe liegende Tatsache, dass Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust eben auch Teil unserer aller *Familiengeschichten* sind, von einer großen Mehrheit der Bevölkerung kaum wahrgenommen beziehungsweise aus dem Gedächtnis verbannt zu werden.<sup>38</sup>

The reason for this is, as Pfeiffer suggests, is that Germany's attempt to 'deal' with the aftermath of National Socialism does not have a definitive beginning, middle, or end. It has involved different phases represented by very different opinions and reactions.<sup>39</sup>

Welzer's study, however, is not without fault. He claims that the participants were "ganz normale" Deutsche',<sup>40</sup> yet these families would have volunteered to participate in the study. If we can assume that these families were aware of the type of study Welzer was carrying out, which focussed on their families' past in connection with National Socialism, then those families who volunteered must have been prepared to discuss their relatives and their involvement openly (or not, as the case may be). Pfeiffer himself has made the point that there is obviously a large element of the 'un-discussed' among German families, and if this is correct then we can assume that Welzer's participants were perhaps slightly unusual in their openness.

In his study Welzer discovers an unusually high number of respondents who claimed that their relatives were heroes, resisters, or at the very least, not Nazis. Perhaps this is because it was those families who were secure in their belief that their relatives were innocent, or at least, not guilty, who felt they could more openly discuss their connections, and respond to the survey. Whether the relatives in question were actually heroes or not is irrelevant; most people would be more inclined to talk about their family's past if they believed their relatives were heroes rather than criminals.

Pfeiffer's suggestion that, in general, families are not open to discussing their past indicates that many people value family relations above the truth. The question remains whether families who knew that their forbears committed atrocities under National Socialism would have taken part in Welzer's study, and how they would have responded.

One of Pfeiffer's motives for writing *Mein Großvater im Krieg* was his lack of knowledge of his

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<sup>38</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 17

<sup>39</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p.17

<sup>40</sup> Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, "Opa war kein Nazi", p. 11

grandparents' lives during the War, an inevitable consequence of the silence that was experienced by many families. However, Pfeiffer implies that this was neither unusual nor curious; '[d]ass [...] man einige Sachen verschwieg oder geschickt umging, störte in der Familie eigentlich niemanden'.<sup>41</sup> Pfeiffer, however, continues to question his grandfather and pushes him to clarify facts. The silence might be caused by feelings of guilt, something which can also be felt by the post-war generations; '[d]ie nach dem Krieg Geborenen trifft naturgemäß keine Schuld an den Verbrechen der Zeit zwischen 1933 und 1945. Wohl aber tragen die Nachkriegsgenerationen die Verantwortung für etwaige unzureichende oder fehlende persönliche Auseinandersetzung'.<sup>42</sup> *Mein Großvater im Krieg* is a contribution towards accepting this responsibility; it is not a guilt-ridden text of apology, but a quest towards greater understanding.

Guilt is closely connected with shame, and it could be said that many of the third generation are ashamed of their country's past. Krystal writes that 'survivors of the Holocaust still suffer from a feeling of shame over the idea that they did not fight back enough. [...] Whatever one is ashamed of has to be lovingly accepted as part of one's life that was unavoidable'.<sup>43</sup> While Krystal is referring to an acceptance by survivors, this should also apply to the descendants of perpetrators; they are, after all, themselves, and not their parents or grandparents. Van der Kolk and van der Hart suggest that 'being unable to reconcile oneself to the past is at least in part dependent upon the objective nature of the trauma. Can the Auschwitz experience and the loss of innumerable family members during the Holocaust really be integrated, be made part of one's autobiography?'<sup>44</sup> While this statement again is applied to the families of Holocaust victims and survivors, it is also applicable to the families of perpetrators, as they often also have trouble reconciling their loving parents and grandparents with the Nazis depicted in the history books. A distinction should be drawn between the acceptance of family members, and the idea that their actions were acceptable. It is important for family members to accept their relatives and the reality that they did terrible things; it causes ethical questions if a decision is made that those things were acceptable.

Despite Pfeiffer's claim that his aim in writing *Mein Großvater im Krieg* was to be neutral and neither to judge nor to defend, there are places in the text where, perhaps subconsciously, a defensive attitude can be discerned.

Hans Hermann claimed in the interviews that, when he was stationed in Poland, the *Wehrmacht* had not been responsible for war crimes; it had been the SS. Not only that, but he claimed that, at the time, the crimes being committed were unknown to the *Wehrmacht*; "'Das ist mir vollkommen

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<sup>41</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 23

<sup>42</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 22

<sup>43</sup> Henry Krystal, 'Trauma and Aging: A Thirty-Year Follow-Up', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) pp. 76-99 (p. 86-87)

<sup>44</sup> van der Kolk and van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past', p. 178

unbekannt. Das wurde auch nicht aktuell kolportiert, sondern immer erst im Nachhinein, wenn Institutionen auftauchten, die das veröffentlichten und hochspielten. [...] Die Wehrmacht hat gar nichts gemacht und aktiv war nur die SS”'.<sup>45</sup> After some research, Pfeiffer writes in his analysis: ‘Von einer “sauberen” Wehrmacht in Polen, wie es mein Großvater 2005 konstatierte, kann also keine Rede sein. Das heißt natürlich nicht, dass er selbst Augenzeuge war oder gar an Kriegsverbrechen beteiligt gewesen ist’.<sup>46</sup>

The gender and family structure in this text is represented by the notion of typicality and the neutrality that Pfeiffer attempts. This typicality is another factor in his text resonating more with the reader in general, as well as protecting those members of his family that he wishes to.

### Concluding remarks

In this chapter on *Mein Großvater im Krieg* the argument revolves around the discussion of the function of the album, and the counter-narratives that are created through the missing, and unrelated, photographs.

The layout and composition of Pfeiffer’s album provide the focal point for this discussion. The album plays a key role in the interpretation of the text as a whole, and its layout creates more narratives than the written text alone. In particular, the inclusion of ostensibly irrelevant photos (and the concomitant lack of directly and obviously relevant photos) amplifies the resonance of the text to a large number of readers, as they depersonalise the text and remove the focus from Pfeiffer’s family. This also has the effect of downplaying his grandparents’ involvement somewhat. In a similar way, focussing the text on Hans Hermann and not Edith means that, similarly to Medicus in *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, Pfeiffer can protect Edith, and shape the telling of the family history in the way that suits him.

This photographically rich text provides the perfect platform to begin the next chapter, on a text that is photographically poor – Stephan Wackwitz’s *Ein unsichtbares Land*.

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<sup>45</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 52-53

<sup>46</sup> *Großvater im Krieg*, p. 57



## Chapter 3

### Stephan Wackwitz: 'Ein unsichtbares Land'

This text explores the narrator's relationship and connection to his grandfather, Andreas Wackwitz, and his grandfather's history and experiences during both World Wars and the National Socialist era. While the text purports to be autobiographical and biographical, drawing heavily on Andreas Wackwitz's diaries and the narrator's own experiences, the subtitle of the text states it is a *Familienroman*, and Wackwitz describes his writing style as 'Stücke... die sich nicht zwischen Autobiographie, Prosalyrik, philosophischer Abhandlung und Journalismus entscheiden können'.<sup>1</sup>

*Ein unsichtbares Land* is a text that is often discussed in scholarship on post-war German writing. Wackwitz's own political allegiances are an area that many critics and researchers have commented on. A former member of *MSB Spartakus*, Helmut Schmitz holds Wackwitz's views accountable for the political feel of much of *Ein unsichtbares Land*, and claims that it marks a dealing with the collective inheritance that still aspires to break out of the implacability of the experience of the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> Friederike Eigler, on the other hand, writes that Wackwitz writes from a decidedly West German perspective, and that Wackwitz breaks the mould of many men of his generation by talking about his family and earlier life experiences.<sup>3</sup> Silke Horstkotte builds her scholarship on *Ein unsichtbares Land* around Auschwitz as the physical and metaphorical centre of the text,<sup>4</sup> while Dirk Göttsche uses the text in his work on colonialism and National Socialism.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter I focus mainly on the imagined photographs as an aid to Wackwitz's text.

### The Unsaid/Unseen

Wackwitz is inspired to write the text in part by the re-emergence of a piece of his family's history; a camera, which belonged to his then-seventeen-year-old father and was confiscated by British forces at the beginning of the Second World War, is returned to the family sixty years later. The family had been travelling by sea from Namibia when they were intercepted by a British ship that took all those on board captive, relieving them of their goods. Although any hopes that the camera's film might

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<sup>1</sup> Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationsromanen seit der Wende* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005) p. 190

<sup>2</sup> Helmut Schmitz, 'Zweierlei Allegorie: W.G. Sebalds *Austerlitz* und Stephan Wackwitz' *Ein unsichtbares Land*', in *W.G. Sebald: Schreiben ex patria/Expatriate Writing*, ed. By Gerhard Fischer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009) pp. 257-75 (p. 266-75)

<sup>3</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte*, p. 185-216

<sup>4</sup> Silke Horstkotte, *Nachbilder: Fotografie und Gedächtnis in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009) p. 218

<sup>5</sup> Dirk Göttsche, *Remembering Africa, The Rediscovery of Colonialism in Contemporary German Literature* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013) p. 344

still be developed are dashed – nothing can be seen on the negatives – the camera inspires Wackwitz to investigate his grandfather's story. In addition, Wackwitz has access to the diaries his grandfather wrote meticulously as he grew older, and in which he documented his past. The result is an account that combines Wackwitz's investigation into his grandfather's life, memories of his own upbringing, extracts from the diaries, and family photographs. These intertwined family histories, and the addition of a written contribution from Wackwitz's father, are why the narrator refers to the text as 'unser Familienroman'<sup>6</sup> – *our* family novel.

The 'missing' photos that the camera cannot provide form the basis for the unsaid/unseen in *Ein unsichtbares Land*, along with the missing female family members that this text has in common with *Mein Großvater im Krieg*.

The once-lost camera occupies a crucial position in the text. It is the catalyst that inspires the narrator to write the text; at one point he describes it as 'unsichtbares Zentrum der verwirrenden, verborgenen und verschlungenen Windungen eines Familienromans'.<sup>7</sup> The camera is not only important because its recovery inspires the text; it also forces Wackwitz to 'look through' it, and confront his family's history. Despite its now-useless film it allows him to see his grandfather from a different angle. It is also symbolic of all that was lost during the War, and of the victimhood of Germans. Interestingly, the camera that takes such a central position within the narrative is unconnected to all the photographs found in the text; the camera's film, after all, could not be developed. The photographs in the text were taken by various unmentioned cameras, and Wackwitz concentrates on describing the background to the images and the people in them, leaving out why they might have been taken. The initial hope was that, on its return, the camera's film might reveal 'memories', particularly of Andreas Wackwitz. The useless film becomes a symbol of death – Andreas Wackwitz is dead, as are any potential clues or memories that the film might have uncovered. The discovery that there were no additional photographs to add to Wackwitz's 'memory' collection of his grandfather was a setback to Wackwitz's research; while Wackwitz has his grandfather's diaries, he puts more value on photographs than the written word. Andreas Wackwitz spent a great deal of time laboriously writing his diaries, but he was writing them from memory, and could include or omit events if he so chose. Photographs, for Wackwitz, hold the promise of a quasi-unmediated memory. But the fact that the film cannot be developed establishes a moment of absence. If, as we noted in the introduction, the photographic process is analogous to the workings of memory, the fact that the film is blank shows that the beginning of the text is marked by a failure

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<sup>6</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land: Familienroman* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2005) p. 146. Quotations from this text will be referenced '*Unsichtbares Land*, page number' only. Throughout this chapter, I use the term 'Wackwitz' to refer to the narrator (a textual function) rather than to the empirical author.

<sup>7</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 18

of the structure of latency and belated return. The text of *Ein unsichtbares Land* can be seen, on one level, as a compensation for this failure.

Indeed, the irony is that the camera plays such an important role in the text *because* its film is useless. Had the film not been useless the camera itself would be of very little significance in the story, but because it is the only real evidence it becomes the catalyst for Wackwitz's writing. The camera becomes a symbol of the invisible (and therefore the unseen) because it cannot provide the images Wackwitz longs for, but it also, alongside Andreas Wackwitz's diaries, sparks his imagination as to what it might have uncovered.

Photographs are central to Hirsch's conception of postmemory: 'Photography's promise to offer an access to the event itself, and its easy assumption of iconic and symbolic power, makes it a uniquely powerful medium for the transmission of events that remain unimaginable'.<sup>8</sup> But the photographic film in Wackwitz's father's returned camera cannot be developed, and it is this gap in the structure of transmission that allows images to emerge in the imagination. Wackwitz writes that he and his father discussed the possibility of what might be on the camera's film, and this speculation feeds the reader's imagination also; they begin to 'see' the imagined images themselves, and to believe that they are accurate.

In this text, the discussion of the unsaid/unseen revolves around the returned (but useless) camera and missing photos, which will offer a strong discussion in the section on counter-narratives.

### **Album versus Individual Photographs**

In Chapter 1 I discussed how Medicus created an album, with existing photographs, but did not reproduce it in *In den Augen meines Großvaters*. Wackwitz's 'album' is even further removed from the reader, because it does not physically exist. The way that he describes the photographs he imagines in the camera, it is clear that he has an 'album' in his head, but in this case he cannot reproduce it in the text. In Chapter 1 the reader can 'see' Medicus' photographs through his description of them, and knows that they exist, but in *Ein unsichtbares Land* the reader knows that the photographs they are 'seeing' exist only in Wackwitz's imagination. As in *In den Augen meines Großvaters* the photographs are withheld from the reader, but in this case to a more extreme degree. Not only does the reader only experience the photographs in and through textual description, but, the 'photographs' themselves are purely and explicitly products of Wackwitz's imagination, so the interpretation the reader receives is displaced even further.

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<sup>8</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29 (2008), 103-28 (p. 107-08)

### Counter-narratives

The dominant narrative in *Ein unsichtbares Land* is that of Wackwitz's narrated journey into the past, and it is the missing photographs that create the counter-narrative. What allows Wackwitz to write the text despite the lack of photographic evidence is Andreas Wackwitz's diaries. They play a significant role in the text, both physically and symbolically. The text contains 43 separate italicized passages which, so the narrator claims, are lifted directly from the diaries, as well as a photograph of one of the volumes.



Fig. 3.3

Wackwitz describes the laborious task that his grandfather undertook in writing the diaries; '[er] schrieb seit den fünfziger Jahren und bis fast zu seinem Tod für seine Kinder und Enkelkinder [seine] Erinnerungen auf',<sup>9</sup> as well as describing the volumes themselves: 'In der Regel waren es zwei- bis dreihundert sehr eng beschriebene Seiten auf zwiebelschalendünnem Durchschlagpapier, von dem jedes seiner fünf Kinder ein Exemplar erhielt. Über fast ein Vierteljahrhundert ist auf diese Weise ein Konvolut von vielen Hunderttausend Wörtern entstanden'.<sup>10</sup> The diaries are valuable to the text and to Wackwitz as they are physical evidence of Andreas Wackwitz's story; while the camera did not survive, the diaries did. It should be noted that the phrase 'zwiebelschalendünnes Durchschlagpapier' is used constantly throughout the text to emphasize that the physical diaries are delicate and easily torn. This phrase is also a metaphor for the fragility of the memories included in the diaries, as their survival is dependent on the survival of the paper pages.

Alongside these material memories, however, Wackwitz also refers to 'inheriting' memories and images from his father and grandfather, but that he does not know how or why - 'auf welchem verschlungenen psychologischen Umwegen, weiß ich nicht'.<sup>11</sup> He describes almost perfectly the structures of postmemory: his own memories are, if not fully evacuated then certainly colonized, by those of previous generations, whether transmitted in material form by some other, more mysterious process. Wackwitz writes of memories:

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<sup>9</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 25

<sup>10</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 25

<sup>11</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 187

die ich selbst vielleicht gar nicht gehabt habe, sondern von denen mir mein Vater erzählt hat oder die auf einem anderen Weg aus den Erinnerungen meines Vaters und Großvaters in meine gelangt sind, in einer so tiefen Schicht vielleicht, dass alle Erinnerung und alles Bewusstsein dort drunten in Wirklichkeit eins und nicht mehr unterscheidbar sind.<sup>12</sup>

He also writes that 'wie die Rohre eines ausziehbaren Fernrohrs, sagen die Generationssoziologen, seien die Erinnerungen und Träume der Väter und Söhne und Enkel ineinander geschoben, und wahrscheinlich lebt wirklich keiner sein innerstes Leben nur für sich'.<sup>13</sup> Horstkotte writes that in the parts of the texts that involve both Wackwitz and his father there is no distinction made between them in terms of whose the memories are.<sup>14</sup> Although memories cannot be 'possessed' as such, the fact that the memories in the text are indistinguishable in terms of whose they are, they provide Wackwitz with a connection to his family. That Wackwitz mentions that an individual's life is never just their own blurs the intergenerational lines and suggests that the generational divisions are not defined.

As noted in the introduction, Hirsch's concept of postmemory needs to be applied critically rather than wholesale. Hirsch's work focuses primarily on the children of survivors – the second generation. A reason for this is that the power of memory-transfer declines if it travels a generation further to the survivors' grandchildren. This is because a child tends to spend less time with their grandparents than their parents, so while the second generation was permanently exposed to their parents' memories and experiences, the third generation may only have small amounts of exposure at a time. However, as Hirsch revised the theory, she came to see that the fact that the memories and experiences have to travel another generation down should not diminish the postmemorial effect.

In the case of Wackwitz, it is in a sense irrelevant whether he genuinely adopted others' memories through exposure to them as a child, since, as we saw in the case of Pfeiffer, postmemory can equally be a product of construction in and through imagination, and through textual and visual artifacts.<sup>15</sup> This is suggested by the vividness with which he describes the non-existent photographs. With no access to the events surrounding the 'Adolph Woermann', his imagined photographs depend entirely on his father's descriptions, but Wackwitz relays them so vividly that he appears to have taken on the memories himself.

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<sup>12</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 187

<sup>13</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 188-89

<sup>14</sup> Horstkotte, *Nachbilder*, p. 255

<sup>15</sup> In "Projected Memory" Hirsch writes: 'As I conceive of it, postmemory is not an identity position, but a space of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, and not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance' (p. 8-9)

If the experience of knowing that their parents or grandparents were perpetrators under the Nazi regime could be seen as trauma, it could be argued that the post-war generations are in fact themselves 'survivors of cultural or collective trauma'; they are the ones who must live with the knowledge that their families were involved in grave atrocities, though of course ethically this is a sensitive issue. If this is the case, the trauma is displaced by a generation, making the perpetrators' children the first generation, and their grandchildren the second. In this situation the exact concept of postmemory is less important; both following generations are closer to the 'trauma' than originally thought, and therefore the power of the memory-transfer does not decline.

In her later article *Surviving Images* Hirsch writes that 'perhaps it is *only* in subsequent generations that trauma can be witnessed and worked through, by those who were not there to live it but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions, and symptoms of the previous generations.'<sup>16</sup> This is especially true in the case of the descendants of perpetrators as it was only after the war that the full force of guilt and shame was brought down on Germany. This reinforces the claims made in the previous chapter concerning German victimhood.

The approach to postmemory theory that I develop in my introduction allows it to be explored in the framework of the descendants of perpetrators. There is, however, a fine line; the argument here is not that the postmemorial experiences of the descendants of perpetrators are identical to the descendants of Holocaust survivors. Victims' families have to endure the knowledge of the inhumanity to which their loved ones were subjected, while the families of the perpetrators and witnesses experience very different memories. What the descendants inherit from their parents and grandparents is not the knowledge of horror and inhumanity, but the knowledge of the atrocities that their relatives committed in the name of the fatherland, and the cultural and collective trauma that was endured as a result, though it is important to reinforce that these experiences are very different from those of Holocaust victims.<sup>17</sup>

Hirsch writes that postmemory can be seen as 'attempted repair'.<sup>18</sup> Wackwitz makes no secret of the fact that his relationship with his grandfather while he was alive was difficult, and that his grandfather was a difficult man in his old age. Early in the text Wackwitz writes that 'ich kann mich eigentlich nicht erinnern, dass mein Großvater zu Lebzeiten öfter als zwei Dutzend Mal das Wort an mich gerichtet hat – jedenfalls nicht in bedeuten[den] Angelegenheiten'.<sup>19</sup> It could be that Wackwitz is using his text to try and repair the relationship he had with his grandfather, or even to reconstruct

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<sup>16</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001) pp. 215-46 (p. 222)

<sup>17</sup> Perpetrator trauma can perhaps best be understood in terms of prolonged breaches of moral values that were legally and culturally suspended during Nazism but remained deeply anchored in the psyche, and in terms of the consequent narcissistic wounding of the individual and collective self-image.

<sup>18</sup> Hirsch, 'Surviving Images', p. 222

<sup>19</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 19

his grandfather. One of the strategies he uses to achieve this is his imagined photographs, which, were they real, would give him more of an insight into his grandfather's earlier life.

Hirsch's work on the 'familial gaze' is pertinent here. Whether Wackwitz's imagined photographs actually existed or not will forever remain unknown, but the images do correspond with the concept of the conventional family narrative. The imagined photograph that inspires Wackwitz the most is of an event that takes place just before the family is captured by the British; an image of Andreas Wackwitz and a fellow traveler, Dr. Lehfeld, smoking their Sumatran cigars in the lifeboat as the 'Adolph Woermann' sinks nearby. Even amid the chaos of a sinking ship, the image that Wackwitz holds in his mind is one of the two men taking part in such an ordinary activity. Wackwitz writes that there is no other photograph he would rather place on his desk than this one of the two men calmly watching the ship sink.<sup>20</sup> The familial gaze can be observed in operation here. The term describes 'the conventions and ideologies of family through which they see themselves'.<sup>21</sup> Family photographs contain numerous 'looks'; that of the photographer and camera towards the subjects, those between the subjects, that of the viewer, and 'the external institution and ideological gazes in relation to which the act of taking pictures defines itself'.<sup>22</sup> It is clear that the familial gaze is influential upon Wackwitz's perception. Wackwitz remembers his grandfather as an old, difficult man, contact with whom is profoundly alienating and perplexing to the young Wackwitz.<sup>23</sup> By reading his diaries and imagining these photographs he identifies characteristics that he never knew his grandfather had. Hirsch writes:

The rigid conventions [family pictures] follow seem to shore up dominant familial myths and ideologies, supporting a circumscribed and static self-representation of the family and closing it off from scrutiny and critique. [...] In recent years, the conventions [they] express and uphold have been seriously scrutinized and examined. This scrutiny defamiliarizes accepted representations of the family and thus refocuses our ways of seeing it.<sup>24</sup>

What happens in *Ein unsichtbares Land*, however, is the opposite: in the course of his postmemorial reconstructions of his grandfather's life, Wackwitz slowly abandons the highly critical account of his grandfather, and becomes aware of the profound, 'subterranean' affinities that bind him to his grandfather. The familial gaze reasserts its power as the text progresses, and the photograph of his

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<sup>20</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 33

<sup>21</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) p. xi

<sup>22</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xvi

<sup>23</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 19-22

<sup>24</sup> Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*, p. xvi

grandfather enjoying a cigar while watching the demise of the Adolph Woermann is emblematic of this process.

By reconstructing his grandfather, Wackwitz is also reconstructing himself as a grandson. He indicates feelings of rejection as a child, when, in the presence of his grandchildren, Andreas Wackwitz would say: 'Och Kinder, nun lasst mich doch mal',<sup>25</sup> and recounts that even then he asked himself 'warum mein Großvater nur in Gegenwart von uns Kindern so gekränkt und schlaff war',<sup>26</sup> and that his grandfather's rejection preoccupied him.

Because his text is based heavily on imagined photographs, Wackwitz does not hide the fact that the text contains parts that were created by his imagination. He does not always distinguish between these and reality, and so the reader is left with the task of distinguishing what is fact and what is fiction. This decision is not absolutely necessary however; the reader's opinion of Andreas Wackwitz would not alter were Wackwitz's imagined photographs real.

Must a historical account acknowledge where it does not know for sure or is it allowed to guess? [...] The question is never whether the events of the past actually took place. The past did exist – independently of our capacity to know it.<sup>27</sup>

This argument questions the importance of knowing fact from fiction. According to Hutcheon, knowing the past is not a question of objective recording, but of constructing and interpreting.<sup>28</sup> Even though there are eyewitness accounts of past events, these only provide a singular interpretation of an event, easily influenced by external forces.<sup>29</sup>

There are ethical issues surrounding the distinction of fact and fiction particularly in biographies and memoirs from the National Socialist era. When it was alleged that Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Bruchstücke* was a work of fiction rather than a factual memoir there was extensive criticism and condemnation of the piece, but this stemmed not from it being fictitious, but from the author claiming fiction as fact. This ethical issue is not so apparent in *Ein unsichtbares Land* because although Wackwitz does not explicitly say what is fiction and what is fact, he never attempts to claim that everything in his text is true.

It emerges that Wackwitz's imagined photographs are based almost entirely on the written material contained in his grandfather's diaries; he produces the images in his head based on the situations and descriptions about which he has read. The diary entries also aid Wackwitz, and the

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<sup>25</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 20

<sup>26</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 21

<sup>27</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1989]) p. 69

<sup>28</sup> Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 70

<sup>29</sup> Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 76



reader, in interpreting the photographs that are reproduced in the text. For example one of the photographs shows a young man in uniform, and a young woman. This photograph is one of many similar photos of a soldier and his girlfriend that would have been very common at the time, and is, on its own, unremarkable. However, with a diary entry and Wackwitz's writing the reader is made aware that this soldier is Ernst Gustav 'Matzen' Wackwitz, brother of Andreas, who was killed in a plane crash during the World War I. It is the diary entry that confirms the photograph as a family photograph to Wackwitz, and thereby mobilizes the familial gaze – without this confirmation the photograph would be redundant. Andreas Wackwitz's diary entry states that 'Sie hatten mir auch erzählt, daß er in Brüssel „eine kleine Freundin“ gehabt hätte, die er über dienstfreie Tage mehrfach besuchte'.<sup>30</sup> Therefore the reader can assume, as Wackwitz does, that the photograph on page 132 (Fig. 3.6) is in fact of Matzen and his 'little girlfriend'. Wackwitz goes one step further:

Ich kann [das Foto] meines toten Großonkels mit seiner belgischen Freundin schon lange nicht mehr betrachten, ohne dass auch sie sich gespenstisch verändern. Im Gegensatz zu den beiden lächelnden Twens auf den Bildern weiß ich ja, dass der junge Mann, der arkadisch und außerhalb der Zeit mit der jungen Bürgerin eines besiegten Landes sein Glück genießt, ein Toter auf Urlaub ist, *dead man walking*.<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 3.6

The imagery of the happy, young soldier-to-die with his 'conquered' girlfriend is a powerful one. Wackwitz focuses only on his great uncle; the smiling girlfriend is ignored, though including this photograph (and her) in the text contributes an interesting perspective. This is the only photograph in the text that by itself acknowledges war, and Germany as an occupying force. The irony of the 'happy' young Belgian woman being the girlfriend of an occupying soldier suggests a degree of naivety in Wackwitz, but, more importantly, the power of the familial gaze to override other possible interpretations. The text, in its fleeting acknowledgments of the status of Belgium as an occupied

<sup>30</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 127

<sup>31</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 132

country in which large numbers of civilians were murdered, deported, and raped by occupying forces, opens up and then immediately closes down alternative interpretations, which might have noted issues of military history, gender politics, and the power differentials entailed in both, which might in turn have forced a more skeptical and less nostalgic account of Matzen Wackwitz's life and death.

Curiously, despite the text revolving around Andreas Wackwitz, his diaries and photographs, there are hardly any photographs of him in the text. The only photograph which can be assumed to portray Andreas Wackwitz as the subject shows a man holding a rifle, kneeling over an animal he is assumed to have just killed, with a desert backdrop.



Fig. 3.9

This lack of photographs of the text's main subject is likely due to the lack of photos of him in existence. It is also relatively common that writings on domestic photography contain few images of the paternal figures, as he is often the one holding the camera and taking the pictures.<sup>32</sup> This would correspond with why there are very few images of Andreas Wackwitz in the text.

Without the diary entries, Wackwitz's text would not have come into existence in its current form. However, because the diary entries are omnipresent throughout the text, the reader is encouraged to put trust in Wackwitz's writing, even the imagined photographs, because even they appear to have a basis ostensibly documented in fact. This trust, however, depends on whether the reader believes that the diary entries, and the photographs printed in the text, are genuine in the first place. It is initially quite easy to place trust in photographs, especially those that existed before 'photo-shopping' became openly commonplace. Photographs are seen as evidence – evidence of an event, of a presence.

The text contains a clue that suggests Wackwitz might not be being entirely honest about the missing photographs. The photograph on the cover is acknowledged as depicting the 'Adolph Woermann', taken by Gustav Wackwitz. This is a subtle suggestion that perhaps the film was not entirely useless, and that Wackwitz may be concealing photographs that did in fact survive;<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> J.J. Long 'Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe*: Photography, Narrative, and the Claims of Postmemory', in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006) pp. 147-65 (p. 155)

<sup>33</sup> Horstkotte, *Nachbilder*, p. 266

‘Wackwitz [...] verweigert eine Rettung der Vergangenheit, indem die möglicherweise existierenden Fotografien aus der Kamera Gustav Wackwitz’ dem Leser vorenthalten werden’.<sup>34</sup> If it is the case that Wackwitz is concealing photographs, the reader could take this in one of two ways: they could trust the imagined photographs more because they think they might in fact exist, or they could trust Wackwitz’s writing less because they suspect him of willful dishonesty.

This reinforces the issue of trust that has been dealt with already, here and with Medicus’ and Pfeiffer’s texts. Medicus ‘fixed’ the interpretation of his album by not publishing it, and Wackwitz fixes the reader’s interpretation to a greater extent because he only imagines the photographs he wishes to imagine; unpleasant scenes and memories have no chance of being integrated, and when such a possibility emerges – as in the case of Matzen with his Belgian girlfriend – it is ward off by recourse to the familial gaze. This has the effect of actually granting the reader more ‘rights’ to imagination as Wackwitz uses imagination himself, and so they are more likely to use their own imaginations to add to Wackwitz’s writing because they know that he has used imagination himself.

Similarly to Medicus’ ‘living’ photographs and documents, the missing camera in *Ein unsichtbares Land*, which is the catalyst for the whole project, takes on the position of an all-seeing, all-knowing character itself. It brings hope (of new connections and old memories), then devastation (at the loss of things hoped for), and symbolizes the memories, supported by Andreas Wackwitz’s diaries. While it cannot tell its own story due to the blank photographic film, its narrative is created through the imagination of Wackwitz, and in turn this prompts the reader’s imagination and interpretation of Wackwitz’s imagined photographs.

### Gender and Family Structure

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, like *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, has a strong connection to Freud’s *Familienroman*. Eigler cites the connection between Wackwitz’s subtitle *Familienroman* and Freud’s article *Der Familienroman des Neurotikers*.<sup>35</sup> This is a connection that Wackwitz explores in the text himself. Freud claims that as children we idolize and aspire to be like our parents. As children grow older and meet others’ parents, unfavourable comparisons can, in some cases, lead to children believing their biological parents to be adoptive parents. This phenomenon tends to occur in particularly imaginative children, a vivid imagination being characteristic of neurotics.<sup>36</sup> This theory can be seen, to some extent, in the post-war generation, particularly the *68er Generation*, a term that broadly groups the leftist movements of 1960s Germany.

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<sup>34</sup> Horstkotte, *Nachbilder*, p. 268

<sup>35</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte*, p. 188

<sup>36</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Der Familienroman des Neurotikers* (Leipzig: Henricus, 2012 [1909]) p. 3-4

Wackwitz writes as one of the *78er Generation*. This 'generation' followed on from the *68er Generation* (see Introduction), and resented the earlier movement for the part they played in shaping opinions of the National Socialist past. The *68er Generation* was openly critical of the war generation's involvement in Nazism, and it was sometimes known for groups to idolize Jewish philosophers, and others who would have been targeted by the Nazi regime. Eigler writes that these idols replaced this generation's own parents, as in Freud's theory of the *Familienroman*.<sup>37</sup> Indeed Wackwitz describes this phenomenon in the text, with particular reference to activist Rudi Dutschke, a prominent member of the *68er Generation*. The text quotes Dutschke's wife, who claims that Dutschke had always had difficulty with his German identity, and 'um sich davon distanzieren zu können, bildete er sich ein, daß er ein Jude sei, den die Dutschkes bei sich versteckt hätten'.<sup>38</sup> This could be seen as an example of Freud's theory on a historical and political level, demonstrating that the shame and guilt felt by Dutschke about his family's involvement in the war drove him to compensate for this and fantasize about being from a different, less guilt-ridden, background. It is possible that Dutschke and others like him did not just want their own personal genealogy to be cleansed of guilt, but that of the entire German nation; *Ein unsichtbares Land* is symbolic of a German family romance.

Aspects of the *68er Generation* confrontation can be found in the text. Bourguignon writes that 'silence is looking away, unwillingness to confront reality. Ignoring, denying the past, we risk madness'.<sup>39</sup> Wackwitz writes about his grandfather's, and other male family members', silence around female family members. He describes 'das steinern gewährte Schweigen der Familienmänner'<sup>40</sup> that he experienced as a child, and how he thought this was abnormal at an age when what children want is a 'normal' family. He then goes on to describe that outside the family Andreas Wackwitz was '[ein] eloquenter und lebhafter Mann',<sup>41</sup> and his confusion about this. Andreas Wackwitz's silence could have been an example of the unwillingness to confront reality as in Bourguignon's theory, but perhaps his meticulous diaries are compensation for his verbal silence. This is similar to Medicus' grandfather Wilhelm Crisolli, whom Medicus never had the opportunity to meet. In line with this, Wackwitz's family novel could be an example of his trying to come to terms with Germany's past and his family's involvement in it. Although Bourguignon makes this statement in reference to the descendants of victims of the Holocaust, it could also be applied to the

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<sup>37</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte*, p. 188

<sup>38</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 258

<sup>39</sup> Erika Bourguignon, 'Bringing the past into the Present: Family Narratives of Holocaust, Exile, and Diaspora: Memory in an Amnesic World: Holocaust, Exile, and the Return of the Suppressed', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78 (2005), 63-88 (p. 84)

<sup>40</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 19

<sup>41</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 20

descendants of German perpetrators and witnesses, as in the argument about to whom postmemory can apply.

An aspect of Freud's *Familienroman* theory can be seen in the passage about the stories Wackwitz's grandmother told him as a child:

Es war schön, wenn meine Großmutter mir vor dem Einschlafen erzählte, was mein Vater als kleiner Junge gemacht, gespielt und angestellt hat. Kinder lieben solche Erzählungen; sich vorzustellen, dass auch ihre Eltern einmal klein gewesen sind, scheint ihnen fast so tröstlich, lustig und kurios wie ein Märchen oder die Geschichte eines auf einer Gans in der Luft umherfliegenden kleinen Jungen.<sup>42</sup>

In some ways this could be seen as the converse to Freud's theory; Freud claims that children idolize their parents, and want to be like them, whereas Wackwitz wants to know whether his parents were like him – almost the opposite.

Freud's *Wunscheltern* theory in his article about the *Familienroman* could have another connection with Wackwitz's text. By imagining and learning more about his grandfather's life, he is trying to create a different grandfather; a man who was not the difficult person he remembered, but somebody quite different. Freud writes:

Kleine Ereignisse im Leben des Kindes, die eine unzufriedene Stimmung bei ihm hervorrufen, geben ihm den Anlaß, mit der Kritik der Eltern einzusetzen, und die gewonnene Kenntnis, daß andere Eltern in mancher Hinsicht vorzuziehen seien, zu dieser Stellungnahme gegen seine Eltern zu verwerten.<sup>43</sup>

Out of his entire family, Wackwitz chose his grandfather to be the centre of his *Familienroman*. This will not have been a random choice; the combination of his past, and the mystery of who he was, make an interesting text. However, by choosing to write about his grandfather, and occasionally, his father and his own son, Wackwitz is clearly highlighting the male line of his family. In fact, his mother is only mentioned at one point in the text, despite the fact that she, too, experienced trauma during the War. This could be due to the silence Wackwitz experiences around his male relatives. He writes that this silence is something the women who married into the family had become used to and seemed to ignore,<sup>44</sup> but the silence, particularly Andreas Wackwitz's, is what caught Wackwitz's imagination in the first place. In this sense, the familial silence is the

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<sup>42</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 147-48

<sup>43</sup> Freud, *Der Familienroman des Neurotikers*, p. 3-4

<sup>44</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 19-20

inaugurating gap that generates the text, a verbal counterpart to the overexposed film on which no images are discernible.

At the same time, highlighting of the male line functions as a subconscious compensation for male rivalry:

Es zeigt sich aber hier bereits der Einfluß des Geschlechts, indem der Knabe bei weitem mehr Neigung zu feindseligen Regungen gegen seinen Vater als gegen seine Mutter zeigt und eine viel intensivere Neigung, sich von jenem als von dieser frei zu machen.<sup>45</sup>

While including it in his text, Wackwitz rebels against an aspect of the *Familienroman*, in that at various points in the texts he describes the characteristics and history he has 'inherited' from his grandfather. Freud theorizes that children are susceptible to believe that their biological parents are not those who brought them up, but Wackwitz openly acknowledges what he inherited from his grandfather. This male inheritance connects with the 'snake story', part of a diary entry that Wackwitz includes in the text. To summarize it briefly, Andreas Wackwitz relayed a story from his time in Namibia when on a journey his group encountered a cobra, that they repeatedly believed they had killed, but had in fact managed to survive. This tale subconsciously reinforces the dominance of phallic symbolism included in the text.

Through reading his grandfather's diaries and the writing of the text, Wackwitz discovers that he actually has a significant amount in common with his grandfather (as noted in the discussion of the familial gaze, above), and this is a great surprise to him. He writes:

[es] war für mich erstaunlich und unheimlich – vor allem deshalb, weil sich herausstellte, wie ähnlich mein Leben dem eines Mannes inszwischen geworden ist, dem ich, als er noch lebte und ich jung war, so unähnlich werden wollte wie irgend möglich.<sup>46</sup>

There are genetic similarities – Wackwitz and his grandfather were of similar height, and they went grey at similar ages,<sup>47</sup> but they also both had a liking for cigars, and worked abroad.<sup>48</sup> Wackwitz writes that while reading his grandfather's diaries he sometimes felt like his and his grandfather's lives were connected without his having noticed. Not all the similarities are pleasant for him to see, but they connected him to the man who he saw as silent and irritable, and by implication reconstruct his grandfather quite literally in his own image.

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<sup>45</sup> Freud, *Der Familienroman des Neurotikers*, p. 4

<sup>46</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 35

<sup>47</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 39

<sup>48</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 35

*Ein unsichtbares Land* is, finally, also a story of family survival. Wackwitz writes that ‘das Überleben meines Großvaters, die Überlieferung seiner Gene und Erinnerungen durch meinen Vater und mich an meinen Sohn, ist die Geschichte einer Solidarität’.<sup>49</sup> He writes this after an excerpt from Andreas Wackwitz’s diary that recounts his being wounded while fighting in 1915. Andreas Wackwitz survives this, in addition to surviving the sinking of the ‘Adolph Woermann’, and the events of the *Schlangengeschichte*. His is not the only tale of survival; in one of the rare mentions of his mother, Wackwitz writes that she too escaped death after being injured in a Spitfire attack in 1944.<sup>50</sup> All these events create the impression that the continuation of the Wackwitz line was something of a miracle. Perhaps knowing how close he came to never being born motivated Wackwitz to write his family novel, to emphasize how lucky his family was to escape fate, and in turn, how lucky his son is to exist. As a result, *Ein unsichtbares Land* could be seen as a chronicle of a family’s survival of disasters, which reinforces the idea of German victimhood explored in other chapters.

### Concluding remarks

In this chapter on *Ein unsichtbares Land* the discussion has revolved around the returned camera and its missing photos, and the counter-narratives they create.

The exploration of this text has shown that, in an extension from Chapter 1, where I showed that photographs aid history and memory, in *Ein unsichtbares Land*, the hope and promise of photographs alone is strong enough to motivate Wackwitz to write the text. Despite the imagined photos being powerful, the withholding of them, from Wackwitz as well as the reader, limits the interpretation. Again, this extends from Chapter 1, where the reader is displaced and their interpretation fixed by the lack of the album. In *Ein unsichtbares Land* the reader is displaced again because not only do they have no access to the album, but neither does the narrator.

This chapter also shows that family members can be reconstructed through writing, as can also be seen in Chapters 1 and 2. This discussion is extended further in Chapter 4, on Alexandra Senfft’s *Schweigen tut weh*.

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<sup>49</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 91

<sup>50</sup> *Unsichtbares Land*, p. 95

## Chapter 4

### Alexandra Senfft: '*Schweigen tut weh*'

*Schweigen tut weh* explores the author's relationship with her mother Erika, and grandmother Erla. Her grandfather, Hanns Ludin, was a high-profile National Socialist who was posted by Hitler to Slovakia, and after the end of the War was imprisoned and executed for war crimes.

#### The Unsaid/Unseen

In the same way as in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, the treatment of the unsaid/unseen in *Schweigen tut weh* revolves around photographs; those that are included in the text, as well as those that are not. In contrast to the texts analysed thus far in this thesis, the family members who are unseen in *Schweigen tut weh* are male; although Hanns Ludin plays a prominent role, Senfft's father Heinrich, a lawyer and himself a writer, is absent from the text. Only one photograph has a caption that mentions him by name (Fig. 4.22); the remainder are entitled 'Erika mit Mann'.



22 Erika mit Heinrich Senfft, Berkeley/USA, 1960

Fig. 4.22

Heinrich's absence from the text is continued through the choice of photographs. He appears in three images, but is never looking into the camera, or appears with his face partially hidden. This obscures Heinrich's part in the familial gaze, because the viewer is denied any connection with him; every other major figure in the text is shown looking straight into the camera in at least one photograph. The author's conscious decision to omit him from the text is not the result of a difficult relationship with her father, whom she thanks in her acknowledgements. I will return to the topic of Senfft's father in the section on gender and family structure below.

It was not just photographs that were important to Erla and Erika (and afterwards to Senfft); a significant amount is written about the letters that they received from Hanns Ludin. A letter that has a particular impact is Ludin's farewell letter, written while he awaited his execution. It was one of many he had drafted and attempted to send to his family;



Einen davon hat meine Großmutter 1993 für meine Mutter abgeschrieben, nicht wie üblich in Sütterlin, sondern in deutscher Schreibschrift – wohl, damit auch andere ihn lesen können. Darin heißt es: “Das Spiel geht nun zu Ende. Ich habe es verloren und muss mir das, wie ich deutlich fühle, selbst zuschreiben.” Er habe kläglich versagt und könne das nur durch einen anständigen Tod begleichen. “Dass ich kein Verbrecher bin, weißt du”, schreibt er seiner Frau.<sup>1</sup>

Erika struggles with the question concerning ownership of the letters; during a stay in hospital she receives a package of her father’s letters from Erla, and begins to grapple with the problem of possession; ‘Vatis Brief – mein Brief, dein Brief, unser Brief. Das Ringen um H.L.s Erbe hat begonnen.’<sup>2</sup> As in *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, documents and letters play an important role in the memory of family members alongside photographs.

Senfft writes of her grandfather’s time in prison: ‘es gibt ein Foto von Hanns aus der Rastatter Zelle. Das hat Erla aufgenommen, als sie ihn besuchte.’<sup>3</sup> Although this is one of the only photographs to which the narrator refers to directly, it is not printed in the text. Its inclusion would provide an alternative, more personal and vulnerable, perspective to Senfft’s album, and by withholding it the reader is prevented from sharing the emotional experience of Hanns Ludin’s imprisonment, and also ensures his vulnerability is protected. Senfft’s description of Erla’s parents provides another example of this: ‘Marie kam aus gutem Hause und war eine hübsche, sehr liebens-würdige Frau, die stets milde in die Kamera lächelte, während ihr Mann auf Fotos meist distanziert dreinschaut.’<sup>4</sup> These photos are also missing from the album.

Silence, as in the other texts, plays a role in *Schweigen tut weh*. The use of the word in the title of the text indicates multiple layers of silence within the text. The most obvious silence is that surrounding Hanns Ludin’s National Socialism and the acts of perpetration that he participated in. This is developed further by Erla who portrays him as a ‘good Nazi’ (I will return to this construction of character shortly) to her children in order to override any thoughts that he might have been anything to the contrary. There is also the indication that Erika suffered the traumatising effects of being a child of war and destruction in silence.

The unsaid and unseen in this text revolve around missing photographs and the omission of Senfft’s father Heinrich, which has the capacity to create powerful counter-narratives.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Senfft, *Schweigen tut weh: Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2008) p. 44.

Quotations from this text will be referenced ‘*Schweigen tut weh*, page number’ only.

<sup>2</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 115

<sup>3</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 53

<sup>4</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 58

### Albums versus Individual Photographs

The photographic selection in *Schweigen tut weh* follows the 'album' pattern of Pfeiffer's *Mein Großvater im Krieg*. 33 photographs are divided into two albums, the first of which focuses on Erla (and on Erika's childhood), the second on Erika.

Erika herself recognised the importance of photographs to memory; while she was at school she used them as a distraction: 'sie klebt Fotos vom Familienleben in der Slowakei in ein Album. Es sind Dokumente aus unbeschwerten Tagen. [...] Es gibt viele heitere Fotomotive von der bildhübschen Eri [...] Sie strahlt mit ihrer Zahnlücke in die Kamera und wirkt glücklich.'<sup>5</sup> Similarly to Senfft, Erika recognizes the effects that an album can have as opposed to a pile of photographs; they give order to memories, and connect the dots. They also reinforce the written texts, and can tell stories that words cannot.

### Counter-narratives

The counter-narratives in this text create an alternative story of Erika in contrast to the negative personality that comes across in the writing.

After Erika's death her two children visit her home to clear out her belongings. 'In ihrer Wohnung hatte meine Mutter fast ihre gesamte bewegte Vergangenheit aufbewahrt, und es war nach ihrem Tod die Aufgabe ihrer Kinder, sie zu ordnen.'<sup>6</sup> Senfft describes experiencing a feeling of uncovering the past upon entering the house; 'als mein Bruder und ich nach ihrem Tod in ihre Wohnung fuhren, brach die Vergangenheit über uns hinein'.<sup>7</sup> She describes looking through her mother's photographs and letters as 'ein Tabubruch [...] Vieles konnte und wollte ich damals noch nicht lesen.'<sup>8</sup> It took Senfft seven years to be ready to open up the documents that her mother left: 'ich habe die Wohnung meiner toten Mutter zwar geräumt und ihre Briefe und Fotos in Kisten verpackt, aber erst jetzt, sieben Jahre nach ihrem Tod, habe ich begonnen, mich mit den Inhalten auseinanderzusetzen.'<sup>9</sup> This period of latency also informs the writing process of all three other texts discussed in this thesis. Immediately after the death of the family member at the centre of each narrative, the pain of loss is too strong and the prospect of adding to it by discovering unwelcome facts in family history deters each author from beginning their projects. Despite being triggered by the death of a parent, rather than that of a grandparent as is the case in the other texts, a latency period is still subconsciously observed as in the other texts.

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<sup>5</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 37-38

<sup>6</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 12

<sup>7</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 11

<sup>8</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 11

<sup>9</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 13

On reading her mother's collection of letters and looking at the photographs Senfft sees a story develop; the story of her mother, a 'Nachkriegsfrau'.<sup>10</sup> Senfft discovered parallels between her own story and those of her grandparents and her mother. When relatives asked her why she connected all three in her writing; she responded that she felt unable to separate them because this would mean ignoring 'woher wir kommen, wo wir heute stehen und wohin wir gehen.'<sup>11</sup> The reluctance of Senfft's relatives to uncover the family's history and connect it with subsequent generations corresponds to the difference in generational perspectives evident in the remainder of the text corpus, but in this case more resistance from her relatives is evident in the text.

Senfft writes about how difficult a person Erika was, particularly in her experience as Erika's daughter, and nowhere does she write that Erika was very happy in life, but the majority of photographs chosen show Erika smiling and looking happy. It is likely that Senfft's family photograph collection lacks images of Erika frowning because convention dictates that the photographic subject smiles into the camera. Hirsch's *familial gaze* can be seen in operation here, as in Wackwitz's *Ein unsichtbares Land*. The prominent 'look' of Erika in the majority of photographs is happy, and so this image choice also provides a contrast to the text; while the words lead us to believe that Erika was often unhappy, the photographs show us that she did at least have moments of happiness; this is Senfft's method of dulling the criticism of her mother that is visible throughout the text. Interestingly, the one image that shows Erika unsmiling, is her 'Selbstporträt'.



17 Erika, Selbstporträt, Stuttgart, ca. 1959

Fig. 4.17

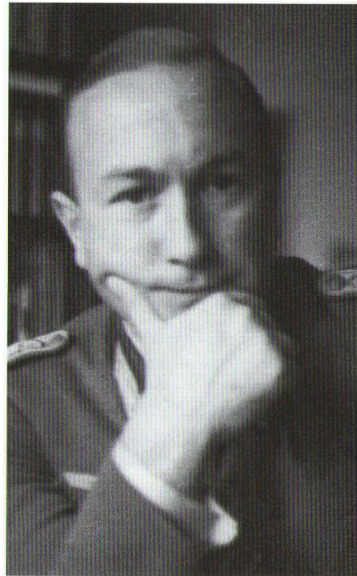
The inclusion of this image gives a different perspective to Erika's character. Senfft describes another photo of a girl looking pensive – herself: 'auf dem ersten Foto aus meiner Anfangszeit im Internat

<sup>10</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 13

<sup>11</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 13

stehe ich ziemlich verloren und unbeholfen vor der massiven Schulmauer, der Rock ist viel zu lang, die Haare sind es auch und die vielen Toasts haben schon einige Spuren verlassen.’<sup>12</sup> Again, this photograph is not displayed in the text, because it has no bearing on either Erla’s or Erika’s story.

Unlike in Pfeiffer’s album in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, there is very little National Socialist presence in Senfft’s photographs. Apart from the cover image and one photograph in the album, which shows a close-up of Hanns Ludin in uniform (though the swastika on his uniform is not visible), all other photographs show their subjects in civilian clothing.



12 Hanns Ludin, ca. 1940

Fig. 4.12

There is no need for Senfft to show images of National Socialist uniforms and symbols; the family’s involvement is prominent enough within the text. One photograph shows Erla and Erika getting into or out of a car, which displays a swastika flag on its mudguard.



13 Erla Ludin mit Erika, 1941

Fig. 4.13

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<sup>12</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 107

Like the cover image, the photograph highlights the contrast between innocence and knowledge, good and evil; Erika and Erla are depicted dressed in white, alongside a car displaying a symbol that has come to be synonymous with murder and genocide. The inclusion of this photograph highlights Erika's association with National Socialism. There is no evidence in the text that Erika was a supporter of National Socialism, given that she was a child during its reign. Erla's generation defended Hanns Ludin, but there are no explicitly pro-National Socialist statements made. By publishing a photograph of her mother and grandmother with a National Socialist symbol Senfft makes the political connection that the text lacks.

Further National Socialist symbolism can be seen in the cover image, which gives the impression that the text is going to revolve around Hanns Ludin; it removes the focus from Erla and Erika.



Fig. 4.34

Erika is present in the image but only her back is visible, and Senfft does not refer to the photograph until halfway through the text. This photograph is another reason why Senfft cannot deny her grandfather's position and National Socialist sympathies, though Hitler's face is slightly concealed so that his presence in the photograph becomes clear only on closer observation. In the photograph Hitler is smiling and bending down to greet a small child. This juxtaposition of Hitler's public persona and the atrocities that he ordered makes the photograph a bold choice to place on the cover, despite Hitler's slight concealment. It has the added contrast of the young, innocent child dressed in white, and the murderous dictator. Senfft's choice of cover image suggests that she will not conceal anything in the text; the cover image 'incriminates' her grandfather even before the text is read.

This image also shows the source of what becomes a confused and disturbed family narrative. Erika is shown meeting the symbol of National Socialism – the source of what caused her father to become a perpetrator, her mother to create an alternative character to protect him, and the silence and shame that affected her (and her children) for the rest of her life.

When Senfft reaches the point in her family's biography when she is born, she includes information that she could not have known at the time, for example: 'an der warmen Brust meiner Mutter Eri ist es herrlich und ihre weiche Haut streichelt mich in den Schlaf. [...] Freilich kann ich mich an diese Tage Ende 1961 nicht bewusst erinnern, meiner Mutter bleiben sie noch lange als bedrückende Erfahrung im Gedächtnis'.<sup>13</sup> This statement is important because it is a memory that was important both to Senfft and Erika, though for Senfft it is a positive 'memory', and for Erika it is not necessarily so. Senfft writes that her birth was a blessing in many ways. In response to a letter of Erla's to Erika she writes:

"Ist [Mutter werden] nicht ein ganz großes Glück und eine Gnade?" Mir wird also "die Gnade der späten Geburt" zuteil. [...] Eine Gnade ist es in der Tat, in eine Zeit geboren zu werden, die zwar vom Kalten Krieg geprägt, aber relativ friedlich ist. [...] Ja, es ist eine Gnade, kein Kriegskind zu sein, wenngleich die Destruktivität dieser Zeit in uns Nachgeborenen auf unterschiedliche Weise weiterwirkt.<sup>14</sup>

On the topic of the *Gnade der späten Geburt*, A. Assmann claims that nobody can lay claim to this anymore because it has become universal. Because the number of surviving members of the war generation is dwindling, subsequent generations have adopted the concept as part of their own history. They choose to explore the events that surround their own family and life stories, and it is this that the authors of family novels seek to identify in their texts.<sup>15</sup> Senfft affirms that it is her good fortune to have been born after the end of the war, but it is the occurrences during her mother's childhood that plant the seeds for their difficult relationship, and that Senfft is determined to uncover.

Despite sometimes recounting information as if she had seen it, Senfft admits that she does not remember, for example, a particular point in time when her mother was away in therapy; 'ich habe

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<sup>13</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 214

<sup>14</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 215

<sup>15</sup> Aleida Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding: Generational Identities in Recent Memory Literature', trans. by Michael Ritterson, in *Victims and Perpetrators, 1933-1945: (Re)presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*, ed. by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006) pp. 29-48 (p. 35)



an jene Zeit nicht die geringste Erinnerung und muss sie aus Briefen und den Erzählungen anderer rekonstruieren.’<sup>16</sup> This is another example of constructing postmemory through the text.

In another example of blocking out memories, Senfft describes an incident in which her (at the time) unstable brother threatened her with a knife; ‘ich habe mich offenbar völlig verschreckt hinter einem Sofa versteckt, [...] ich kann mich an diese Situation kaum noch erinnern, verdrängt habe ich sie wie so viele andere Szenen, weil mich diese Welle an Destruktivität zunehmend ängstigte.’<sup>17</sup> Senfft’s assertions that she remembers occurrences from when she was a baby is an aspect of postmemory that is evident in the text. Not remembering frightening events as a child suggests the events were suppressed and kept from her consciousness.

Although *Schweigen tut weh* is a biographical text with no fabrication that we can identify, Senfft’s image captions indicate that she is treating her child-self as a character in a story, rather than a real person in a biography. In figures 4.23, 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, and 4.27 (see Appendix) she has titled herself as Alexandra (etc. ‘Erika mit Alexandra’), but in figures 4.31 and 4.32 she refers to her adult-self as the ‘Autorin’.



23 Erika mit Mann und Alexandra, 1962

Fig. 4.23



32 Erika mit der Autorin, 1996

Fig. 4.32

This combination of multiple ‘characters’ blurs the narration slightly, as the reader is unable to distinguish between the elements of the text that consist of childhood memory and stories, and those that contain adult interpretation. This style is similar to that of Wackwitz, whose text combines narratives from himself, his father, and his grandfather. The focalization of these two texts, however, is different. Focalization, according to Mieke Bal’s definition, defines a fable’s transformations that turn it into a story;<sup>18</sup> the viewer/reader/spectator sees the complete picture, and not just what the actors see.<sup>19</sup> In *Ein unsichtbares Land* it is made clear whose stories and memories are whose; the reader sees Andreas and Gustav Wackwitz’s memories as belonging to

<sup>16</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 241

<sup>17</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 271

<sup>18</sup> W. Bronzwaer, ‘Mieke Bal’s Concept of Focalization: A Critical Note’, *Poetics Today*, 2 (1981), 193-201 (p. 194)

<sup>19</sup> Mieke Bal, ‘The Laughing Mice: Or: On Focalization’, *Poetics Today*, 2 (1981), 202-10 (p. 203)

those individuals, albeit mainly through the words of Wackwitz. In *Schweigen tut weh*, the memories are not often attributed to a source, and so the reader only sees them through Senfft's writing. This gives the impression that the author's opinion is the only one.

The counter-narratives in this text are constructed through the photographs and other material that Senfft does not investigate for several years after taking possession of them. The National Socialist presence in the album tells another narrative to that of the text's words, while the blurring of narratives within the text seems to tell not three individuals' stories, but one.

### Gender and Family Structure

In contrast to the other three texts explored in this thesis, *Schweigen tut weh* is written by a female author. This brings with it a different perspective on and treatment of family structure. The fact that the text focuses on the relationships between Hanns Ludin and Erika, as well as Erla and Erika's, and Erika and Senfft's, mother-daughter relationship, means that Freud's *Familienroman* is of great relevance. Female and feminist family romances require a revision of the Freudian pattern, as the heroine often functions simultaneously as the subject and the object of the narrative. These revisions include the stories of daughters and eventually those of the mothers, but do not change entirely the basic concept of the family as a 'static structure'.<sup>20</sup>

Feminist theorists such as Nancy Chodorow, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva have shown that a feminist reading of Freud's *Familienroman* changes its application to women. For Chodorow it is the bond between mother and daughter that characterizes female identity; for Irigaray 'female silence and negativity in language is replaced by a "parler-femme," and other, specifically feminine speech', and for Kristeva 'women's psychosocial position facilitates the access to the pre-symbolic, what she calls the *semiotic*, which challenges the primacy of the logos'.<sup>21</sup> Hirsch writes:

The "feminist family romance" that emerges in these revisions of psychoanalytic plots and patterns, then, diverges radically both from Freud's family romance and from its female revision, the fantasy of "the-man-who-would-understand." Where Freud posits, at the basis of all individual development, an opposition between successive generations and the child's break from his parents – a break which dominates the female family romances as well – feminist revisionaries allow for the possibility of a continued inter-relation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) p. 10

<sup>21</sup> Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p. 131-32

<sup>22</sup> Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p. 132



Senfft writes of the negative impact that her mother, and her problems, have had on her; 'noch heute, fünfundzwanzig Jahre später, arbeite ich daran zu entschlüsseln, was meine Mutter mir alles aufgeladen und aufgetragen hat.'<sup>23</sup> In reference to Cherrie Moraga's 'For the Color of My Mother' Hirsch writes that 'to speak for the mother, as many of the daughters in this book do, is at once to give voice to her discourse *and* to silence and marginalize her'.<sup>24</sup> This applies to *Schweigen tut weh* too; by writing the text Senfft is simultaneously telling Erika's important story and closing a chapter of her own life. At the same time, Erika's story is told in Senfft's words, and as the author wants her mother to be seen by the reader. The finality of closing the chapter of her life with her mother gives her closure; "'the bond between mother and daughter, daughter and mother, must be broken so that the daughter can become woman'";<sup>25</sup> 'dead mothers do elicit a certain nostalgia; nevertheless their absence invariably furthers the heroines' development.'<sup>26</sup> Dead fathers and grandfathers also cause nostalgia of course, as is shown in Wackwitz's *Ein unsichtbares Land*.

Senfft describes the relationship between Erla and Erika as follows: 'der subtile Kampf um "die Wahrheit" nimmt zwischen den beiden Frauen allmählich schärfere Formen an. Sie sind zwei sehr unterschiedliche Personen – Erla ist geprägt von den Umbrüchen und Werten der Vorkriegszeit, Eri von der veränderten Welt danach.'<sup>27</sup> The mother can be:

Seen as the figure whom one must leave behind, and hence she is assumed to be the background to the selfhood of others but not herself a self or (in modernity) a subject. In another variation on these themes, the mother is dangerous, threatening to hold us back from selfhood, to prevent us from leaving her behind.<sup>28</sup>

This explains the difficult relationship between Erika and Senfft. Being a mother involves reliving one's own childhood relationship to one's mother, but with a difference which makes this maternal position distinct, and changes maternal subjectivity.<sup>29</sup>

According to Freud, daughters retrospectively blame their mothers for all their disappointments in childhood, and break away from them as well as other women, adopting the father as an idol. This begins as a young child when sexual identity is not an issue, and resurfaces in adolescence.<sup>30</sup> Senfft's

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<sup>23</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 117

<sup>24</sup> Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p. 16

<sup>25</sup> Irigaray, 1984, cited in Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p. 43

<sup>26</sup> Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p. 43-48

<sup>27</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 239

<sup>28</sup> Alison Stone, *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2012) p. 11

<sup>29</sup> Stone, *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*, p. 5

<sup>30</sup> Stone, *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*, p. 89

story is consistent with this, with her text documenting her difficult relationship with her mother, and protecting her father, whom she praises, by not including him in the text.

The author dedicates a significant amount of the text to the relationship between her mother and grandfather. Hanns Ludin was absent for most of Erika's childhood. 'Sie war sein Lieblingskind, eine Vattertochter. Die Möglichkeit zu trauern hatte sie damals und auch später nicht. Da nahm das Elend seinen Lauf, erst heimlich, schleichend, später dann brüllend und immer rasender.'<sup>31</sup>

Similarities to the relationship between Senfft and her father Heinrich are hinted at here; he plays very little part in her text but the acknowledgements indicate that they have a strong relationship.

Hirsch writes that 'the story of female development, both in fiction and theory, needs to be written in the voice of mothers as well as in that of daughters.'<sup>32</sup> This is another reason why Senfft needed a latency period before writing *Schweigen tut weh*; she can only come to terms with her mother's story once she acknowledges that being a mother herself allows her to do so.

The female perspective in *Schweigen tut weh* is in direct contrast to the female 'silence' that is evident in the other three texts this thesis examines. This might not always be intentional; Wackwitz rarely mentions his mother or grandmother, and Pfeiffer's grandmother was not well enough to be interviewed. Nevertheless, the female family members are noticeably absent. Senfft's text examines her mother's, and grandmother's, life in detail.

Senfft herself emphasizes the fact that as a woman she has a different perspective, and how important it is to transmit this to the next generation. She writes:

Nach meiner Großmutter und meiner Mutter, die kurz hintereinander starben, bin nun ich die Nächste in der weiblichen Linie. Ich fühle mich verantwortlich, meinen Kindern meine Perspektive zu vermitteln, auch wenn sie vom Familiendiktat abweicht. Ich möchte, dass meine Kinder frei von der überlieferten Schuld, der Scham und ohne die Last der Rätsel der Vergangenheit aufwachsen können. Sie sollen nicht im Zweifel leben und die Welt in Gut und Böse spalten, sondern lernen, beides als Teil des Lebens zu verstehen. Ich bin noch mit dieser Spaltung groß geworden und musste mir hart erarbeiten, diese vermeintlich gegensätzlich Pole zusammenzubringen und die Ambivalenzen zu ertragen. Meine Kinder sollen ein gesundes Bewusstsein für Unrecht entwickeln, ohne Projektionen und ohne alles über einen Kamm zu scheren und die Welt abermals in zwei Lager zu teilen, die vermeintlich nichts miteinander zu tun haben.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 11

<sup>32</sup> Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p. 161

<sup>33</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 16-17

This is further evidence for the importance of the generational shift in guilt transmission, and of how it will be advanced in the next generation (the fourth).

Senfft continues: 'Was hat meine Mutter von ihren Eltern und Großeltern übernommen und an uns Kinder weitergereicht?'<sup>34</sup> Erika becomes ill in later life; 'wir alle sind Komplizen ihrer Krankheit und Komplizen beim Tradieren einer Familiensaga, die wir glauben wie Kinder ein Märchen, und leugnen so unsere Rolle in einem komplizierten Geflecht, das aus ererbten Charaktereigenschaften, problematischen Persönlichkeitsstrukturen und historisch-politischen Verwicklungen und Täterschaft besteht.'<sup>35</sup> Senfft herself recognises the political aspects of German victimhood, and all the characteristics that contribute to the role that the post-war generations play.

As I mentioned in the section on the unsaid/unseen, Senfft's father Heinrich is noticeably absent from the text. In the text's acknowledgments Senfft writes that 'ohne meinen Vater aber wäre meine Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangeheit und der Gegenwart mitunter nur schwer auszuhalten gewesen: Er hat dieses, auch für ihn nicht leichte Buch von Anfang an unterstützt, mich beraten und intensive begleitet.'<sup>36</sup> It could be that Senfft wants to succeed as a writer without the influence of her father's name and reputation, or that she wanted to focus solely on her maternal family. Because her father does not play a large part in the written text, Senfft compensates him by featuring him in her album. It also indicates that Senfft wants to separate entirely her father from her mother's family; her parents later divorced. This is emphasized by her referring to her mother as Erika Ludin, with her maiden name. The omission of Heinrich Senfft creates the same feeling of absence as the missing females in Medicus, Pfeiffer, and Wackwitz. In the three previous chapters the omission of the women indicates a differentiation between the women and the 'Nazis', and so their memory is protected. Senfft's omitting her father, and in doing so protecting him from her criticism of her mother is similar. However, the effects of a missing male are different to those of a missing female. Women held very traditional roles during National Socialism, mainly revolving motherhood and providing a strong workforce for the future.<sup>37</sup> Because of this their omission in texts exploring National Socialist involvement and war is not entirely surprising. The omission of Heinrich Senfft, whom Senfft clearly regards highly, is more surprising. The text, however, explores Senfft's maternal family history, and by separating Heinrich from this she is protecting his reputation and family from association with a high-profile National Socialist.

By allying Erika closely with Hanns Ludin, Senfft is attaching her mother to National Socialism, rather than protecting her from it and the reader's association with it. Senfft's sacrifice of her

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<sup>34</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 303

<sup>35</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 289

<sup>36</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 348

<sup>37</sup> Charu Gupta, 'Politics of Gender: Women in Nazi Germany', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 (1991), WS40-WS48 (WS40)

mother's association with National Socialism in order to protect her father reinforces the break that the daughter must make from the mother.

One male family member who is not withheld from the text is Senfft's uncle, Malte Ludin (Erika's youngest brother). He directed the 2005 documentary *2 oder 3 Dinge, die ich von ihm weiß*, in which he interviews his mother and sisters, as well as the next generation, about their memories of Hanns Ludin, as well as documenting his father's National Socialist involvement.<sup>38</sup> Malte Ludin's film is mentioned in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, where Pfeiffer writes that 'besonders der Streifen von Malte Ludin [...] offenbart eindringlich, wie schwer sich Malte Ludins Verwandte damit tun, den eigenen Vater oder Großvater trotz überwältigender Beweislast als NS-Täter oder Mörder zu begreifen.'<sup>39</sup> Malte Ludin's film adopts a confrontational stance, and contains some heated debates between his family members.<sup>40</sup> This conflict is supported by Senfft's text: '[die] Schuld ist in meiner Familie nie ohne Wenn und Aber anerkannt worden, vielmehr hat man sie bestritten und bestreitet sie zum Teil noch heute.'<sup>41</sup> Malte Ludin had a considerable influence on Senfft; he was highly educated and had experienced the student riots, and was the only one of the six siblings who was able to objectively say 'mein Vater war ein Nazi.'<sup>42</sup>

Senfft affirms what Malte Ludin discovered, that 'innerhalb der Familie streiten wir bis heute darüber, was die Deutschen während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus wirklich gewusst haben und wie sie anschließend politisch und gesellschaftlich damit umgegangen sind. Uns Enkelkindern fällt es weniger schwer, die Rolle unseres Großvaters zu bewerten.'<sup>43</sup> This corresponds with the work on the *68er Generation* (see Introduction) and is comparable to *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, where Pfeiffer chooses to investigate and objectively discuss his grandfather's involvement.

According to Malte Ludin, his film tells "'a typical German story'"<sup>44</sup>, a concept I have explored at length in Chapter 2. The fact that Senfft is not the first member of her family to undertake such an investigation gives her the freedom to make her own judgments on what she discovers, as well as allowing her to focus on Erla and Erika rather than Hanns Ludin. Had Senfft been the first family member to explore her family history in the context of National Socialism, the fact that her

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<sup>38</sup> Kerstin Mueller Dembling, 'Opa Was a Nazi: Family, Memory, and Generational Difference in 2005 Films by Malte Ludin and Jens Schanze', *The German Quarterly*, 84 (2011), 477-95 (p. 482)

<sup>39</sup> Moritz Pfeiffer, *Mein Großvater im Krieg 1939-1945: Erinnerung und Fakten im Vergleich* (Bremen: Donat, 2012) p. 30

<sup>40</sup> Mueller Dembling, 'Opa Was a Nazi', p. 482

<sup>41</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 16

<sup>42</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 309

<sup>43</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 335

<sup>44</sup> A.O. Scott, '2 oder 3 Dinge, die ich von ihm weiß (2005): Our Father, the Nazi Zealot: A Family Grapples With Its Burdens and Blind Spots', *The New York Times*, 24 January 2007

<[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/24/movies/24thin.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/24/movies/24thin.html?_r=0)> [accessed 14 December 2013] (Paragraph 1 of 14)

grandfather was a high-profile Nazi might have been a constraint. Focussing on her mother and grandmother instead of on Hanns Ludin could have been seen as a form of denial or avoidance, but because her uncle had already explored the family history Senfft was free to explore what really interested and affected her – her mother's familial relationships. Another reason for Senfft's writing about her family is Erika did not appear in Malte Ludin's documentary. This allows Senfft to compensate her mother by bringing Erika to the fore in the *Schweigen tut weh*.

As I have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, there are shortcomings in Harald Welzer's study on the handing down of memories of war involvement among German families. This is actually largely irrelevant to Senfft's case. This is because, unlike the grandfathers of Medicus, Pfeiffer, and Wackwitz, Hanns Ludin was a high-profile, well-known Nazi, and, although a 'Schreibtischtäter',<sup>45</sup> his involvement is virtually impossible for Senfft to ignore, though she writes that in her family 'der Vater, mein Großvater, galt als "guter Nazi"'.<sup>46</sup> She writes: 'Er mag ein charmanter, begildeter, erotischer und witziger Mann gewesen sein, aber er war ein Schreibtischtäter und trug in der Slowakei die politisch-diplomatische Verantwortung für den Tod von nahezu 70 000 Juden.'<sup>47</sup> This had an impact on Erika too; 'mein Großvater ist aktiv an einem industriellen Massenmord beteiligt, dem größten aller Menschheitsverbrechen, und das in einem Milieu, das die Judenvernichtung zu jenem Zeitpunkt für selbstverständlich hält. Meine Mutter, noch keine zehn Jahre alt und vollkommen unschuldig, ist durch diese Entwicklungen bereits fürs Leben gezeichnet'.<sup>48</sup> This honesty and its casual inclusion in the text are unusual, and reinforce my earlier observations on the inclusion of Hitler on the cover photo: that Senfft is not concealing any of her family history in this text. The honesty implies to the reader that they can believe all that is written.

Senfft states that she has never hidden the fact that her grandfather was a high-profile Nazi, but that her feelings of family guilt cause her to embellish;

Ich habe nie verschwiegen, dass mein Großvater ein Nationalsozialist war, und habe auch nie daran geglaubt, dass man als ranghoher Vertreter des Dritten Reiches unschuldig geblieben sein konnte. Ich habe aber, wenn ich Freunden von diesem Großvater erzählte, am Ende immer gemurmelt, angeblich habe er auch Juden gerettet.<sup>49</sup>

Though the well-informed Senfft might not have given herself the option of denying her grandfather's guilt, her family tried to cover it up in the past. She writes:

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<sup>45</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 16

<sup>46</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 13

<sup>47</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 16

<sup>48</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 80-81

<sup>49</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 17

In unserer Familie herrschte stets eine immense Abwehr gegen alles “Böse”: Der Vater, mein Großvater, galt als “guter Nazi”, als einer, der angeblich nicht wusste, welche Folgen seine politischen Positionen und seine Taten hatten. [...] Einer dieser vielen “unschuldigen” Nationalsozialisten. Oder selbst ein Opfer seiner Zeit, wie es bei uns auch heißt. Mein Großvater – Täter, Opfer, ja was denn nun? [...] Alles, was in das makellose Bild nicht passte, durfte nicht sein, wurde verschwiegen, wegdiskutiert, schöngeredet. Die Täter, das waren die vulgären Nazis, nicht wir, das können wir gar nicht sein, denn wir sind gebildet und kultiviert.<sup>50</sup>

This cover-up, if not denial, of guilt, is typical of post-war families. Senfft finds it difficult to believe that her grandfather was innocent, and that such a high-ranking member of the party could not have known where the Jews were being deported to – to death camps, rather than to work camps as her aunts insisted.<sup>51</sup>

However, in family conversations she doubts herself; ‘Gespräche mit Familienmitgliedern, Freunden und Bekannten bringen mich immer wieder ins Schleudern, denn naturgemäß argumentiert jeder Mensch nach seiner eigenen persönlichen und politischen Façon und vor dem Hintergrund der eigenen Lebensgeschichte.’<sup>52</sup> This connects to Welzer’s study, where it was found that each generation passes on a story or memory as they best understand it, while adding parts to it.<sup>53</sup>

Welzer’s study is also closely connected to the concept of guilt transmission in the text. Senfft carefully distinguishes between feelings of guilt and guilt itself; according to her the former can be inherited but the latter cannot be. She writes that ‘es wäre schön gewesen, sagen zu können: *Mein Opa war kein Nazi*. Mein Großvater war aber einer und zwar einer, der sich aktiv schuldig gemacht hat. Deshalb sind weder seine Kinder noch die meinen und ich Schuldige. Schuld ist nicht vererbbar – Schuldgefühle und Leid sind es schon.’<sup>54</sup> Senfft’s statement echoes the title of Welzer’s book, and while this might not have been her specific intention, the obvious connection and emphasis placed on the statement should not be overlooked. By connecting her text to Welzer’s study, Senfft acknowledges that familial transmission can be problematic, and that she has found similar issues within her family which form the basis of the text. Senfft also acknowledges that the importance lies not in her generation admitting his guilt, but rather acknowledging what happened; ‘es heißt nicht,

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<sup>50</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 13-14

<sup>51</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 167

<sup>52</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 168

<sup>53</sup> Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, “*Opa war kein Nazi*”: *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2003 [2002]) p. 14

<sup>54</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 17

dass die Kinder und Enkel die Schuld für die Taten ihrer Großeltern abtragen müssen, es heißt: die historischen Fakten anzuerkennen. Hannah Arendt hat das "Tatsachenwahrheiten" genannt, den was Meinungen betrifft, so gibt es keine einzige "Wahrheit".<sup>55</sup> Despite Senfft's statement that guilt is not transferable, Erika did not agree; 'Die "überantwortete" Schuld ihrer Eltern trägt Eri als unverarbeitetes Gefühl in sich, fast als sei sie mitschuldig. Schuldigen gebührt Strafe.'<sup>56</sup> This difference in perspective between Senfft and Erika again corresponds to the generation shift and political application of postmemory, to which I will return shortly.

The topic of German victimhood is of interest to Senfft. She writes that as the relatives and descendants of Hanns Ludin, her family is caught in the net of denial. She maintains that it is always 'others' who are the perpetrators and questions whether her family are really victims of circumstances and poor decisions.<sup>57</sup> This is a brave question because it interrogates conventional memory politics and the adoption of victimhood. Senfft acknowledges that being the descendant of a victim or of a perpetrator is not comparable because the experiences are fundamentally different; although she can consider her mother a victim of circumstance, she would not compare these experiences to those of a descendant of a Holocaust victim.<sup>58</sup> This statement connects to the political problems attached to postmemory. She writes that she would not compare her mother's victimhood to that of a descendant of a Holocaust victim, and of course these two experiences are very different, but the comparison also brings up ethical concerns. One of the reasons it has taken several generations to reflect on family history is because it was 'unacceptable' for Germans to feel they were victims.

Although Senfft writes that guilt is not inheritable, she does not deny that it still has a place in her family. She writes that 'über sechzig Jahre sind vergangen, seit mein Großvater gehenkt wurde – fast ein Menschenleben. Wenn ich bedenke, wie sehr Schuld von damals noch heute in uns, den Nachkommen, weiterwirkt – unbemerkt, versteckt, verdeckt, verschwiegen - , dann sind diese Jahre keine Zeit. Keine Zeit oder nicht genutzte Zeit.'<sup>59</sup> I have already explored Senfft's claim that guilt is not transmittable to subsequent generations, but this quotation does acknowledge that guilt has been transmitted, if subconsciously. Senfft however does not wish to let her family's involvement affect her; she writes that she has separated herself from her family's history, and that guilt and feelings of guilt are different. She has never felt guilt for the atrocities of National Socialism because

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<sup>55</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 19

<sup>56</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 239-40

<sup>57</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 270

<sup>58</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 304

<sup>59</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 16

it is not her fault that her grandfather, and other Germans, made it possible for these crimes to take place.<sup>60</sup>

Unlike the other three authors whose texts are examined in this thesis, Senfft takes on the subject of guilt directly. She also writes of her perception of Germany's collective guilt; 'zwei Weltkriege haben die Deutschen begonnen und verloren, und sie haben den größten Massenmord der Geschichte zu verantworten. Es ist das Land der Verlierer und der Täter, eine doppelt schwere Hypothek.'<sup>61</sup> Although Senfft does not feel guilty herself, she experiences others' attempts to make her feel so. She describes her first days at a British boarding school; "'You fucking Nazi", zischt der große Junge, während ein anderer mich anrempelt. Mir ist die Dimension dieser Beleidigung nicht bewusst, an meinen vor dreißig Jahren gestorbenen Großvater denke ich in diesem Moment wahrlich nicht.'<sup>62</sup> This again displays the generational shift in guilt transmission. The fact that Senfft does not connect her grandfather to this insult is a result of her membership of a generation that is distanced from National Socialism. It also shows that Senfft does not connect herself with her grandfather and his political affiliation, and that she does not want to be connected to the National Socialists.

Senfft acknowledges the question that is often posed by the war generation when confronted by their children and grandchildren; what they would have done in the position of the war generation.

Wäre ich mit diesem Großvater aufgewachsen, wie wäre ich ihm als Jugendliche und Erwachsene begegnet? Hätte ich ihn irgendwann zur Rede gestellt und hätte er mir ehrlich geantwortet? Ehrlichkeit, Wahrhaftigkeit und Güte, das waren doch die von ihm postulierten Werte, die er meiner Mutter in seinen Briefen zu vermitteln versuchte. Wenn er mir auf Nachfragen etwas über seine Schreibtischtaten erzählt hätte, wie wäre ich dann mit diesem Wissen umgegangen?<sup>63</sup>

The question of what subsequent generations would have done is an issue that also arises in Pfeiffer's *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, but, in much the same way as her treatment of guilt and its transmission, Senfft is much more direct in her approach than Pfeiffer. This again reinforces Senfft's decision to be direct and 'truthful' with the reader. She does not have the factual support that Pfeiffer seeks in the war records, but by being direct she can create some security in her telling of her family's history.

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<sup>60</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 301

<sup>61</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 91

<sup>62</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 105

<sup>63</sup> *Schweigen tut weh*, p. 119



The treatment of gender and family structure in *Schweigen tut weh* is grounded in the perspective of the female and Freud's Family Romance, which shows Senfft symbolically breaking away from her mother to become her own woman by writing the text. Her missing father, and other family relationships, and the way they transmit guilt, show Senfft's displacement from the National Socialist past.

### **Concluding remarks**

In this final chapter, on *Schweigen tut weh*, the main part of the discussion has revolved around Senfft's family and the female perspective of Freud's *Familienroman*.

Similarly to Pfeiffer's *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, the fact that this text contains photographs in albums offers more scope for alternative narratives to form, as does the inclusion in the album of a wide range of images, including National Socialist symbols.

Exploring the text from the point of view of the female family romance shows that Senfft follows the pattern of breaking with her mother in order to become whole herself. She had a difficult relationship with Erika, and needed time after her death before writing the text. By writing it she has created closure, and the break from her mother that tradition dictates.

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored four examples of post-War German literature written by the grandchildren of the war generation's perpetrator collective; Thomas Medicus' *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, Moritz Pfeiffer's *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, Stephan Wackwitz's *Ein unsichtbares Land*, and Alexandra Senfft's *Schweigen tut weh*. Each of these texts has been explored from the point of view of the unsaid/unseen, the individual photographs versus albums, counter-narratives, and family structure and gender.

The unsaid/unseen in the four texts is usually a product of silence, missing photographs, missing family members, or missing items. In *In den Augen meines Großvaters* and *Ein unsichtbares Land* the missing photographs – which are also not reproduced – form the basis of the discussion. This affects the reader's interpretations of the photographs and allows the authors to guide the texts in their own way, particularly in the case of *Ein unsichtbares Land* where the photos are only figments of the narrator's imagination. The reader is also displaced by the lack of photograph albums as the interpretations of the images are fixed by the narrator. In *Mein Großvater im Krieg* and *Schweigen tut weh* the unsaid/unseen revolves mainly around the respective missing family members – Pfeiffer's grandmother and Senfft's father. They are absent from the text, and thereby protected somewhat from association with the negative aspects of family history. Their presence in the photograph albums of these two texts is a form of compensation for omitting them from the writing.

The organization of photographs into an album causes differences in the levels of interpretation of the texts, as well as the photographs themselves. While the texts in *In den Augen meines Großvaters* and *Ein unsichtbares Land* do not reproduce their albums (physical or imagined), the texts in *Mein Großvater im Krieg* and *Schweigen tut weh* do. This generates narratives within the texts and the albums themselves. The album can be used to guide family history, with different results. Pfeiffer's album in *Mein Großvater im Krieg* ensures that the resonance of his text for the German population more widely is amplified, and does not focus solely on his family. In contrast, Medicus' refusal to reproduce his album has the effect of fixing the interpretations of the photographs, and largely limiting the text to his family alone.

The counter-narratives in these four texts are the product of the authors' photographic choices. As shown in *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, Medicus' decision to withhold of his album from the reader, in an attempt to control their interpretations and to prevent alternative narratives, actually has the opposite effect. The reader must use their imagination and cannot rely on what they can see. Pfeiffer's album, as seen in *Mein Großvater im Krieg*, contains a large number of ostensibly irrelevant photographs and these help create a family narrative that is applicable to many German

families, not just to Pfeiffer's. This helps to construct the notion of typicality, and makes his text (at least in terms of its implied intention) resonate more with the reader, as they can imagine their own family members in such situations. In *Ein unsichtbares Land* the counter-narratives are created through Wackwitz's imagined photographs and the missing camera. As in Medicus' text, the reader must rely on their imagination and in this case also on Wackwitz's, in order to 'see' the photographs. This allows the reader to formulate their own interpretations, creating alternative narratives. The missing camera takes on the role of another character, in the same way as the 'living' photographs and documents in Medicus' text. In *Schweigen tut weh* it is the alternative construction of Erika through the album that forms the counter-narrative. By including photographs depicting her positively, Senfft creates an alternative Erika which acts as a counter point to the difficult and depressed character that emerges in her writing.

The four texts all constitute examples of *Enkelliteratur*, rather than of the more rebellious *Väterliteratur*. While *In den Augen meines Großvaters* is specific to Medicus' family, *Mein Großvater im Krieg* resonates with the German nation as a whole, and Pfeiffer includes an argument of typicality in his writing. *Schweigen tut weh* hints at typicality, while remaining family specific as a result of the high-profile nature of Hanns Ludin. Both this text and *Ein unsichtbares Land* show that Freud's *Familienroman der Neurotiker* is still applicable to new texts, and in the case of the former, to texts by female authors.

Although these texts are all family biographies that make strong claims to be based on reality, the authors are able to shape their texts in the way that they would like and portray them, and their families, in the light that they choose. None of the authors deny that their grandparents were actively or passively involved in National Socialism, but they all employ methods to make their family histories more palatable. Medicus 'protects' his grandfather by withholding from the reader the photograph album he has carefully constructed. Pfeiffer fills his album with unconnected photographs to draw attention away from his own grandparents, within the album at least, if not to the same extent in the writing. His grandmother is also absent from much of the verbal text. According to Pfeiffer this is because she was too unwell to be interviewed, but, as a result of this being the case she is also 'protected'. Wackwitz's female family members are noticeably absent from his text, disassociating them from National Socialism, and of course his album does not exist so his imagination can protect his family members. Senfft does not include her father in the text, focusing instead on her grandfather and mother, once again protecting her father, but similarly to Pfeiffer she includes her missing family member in the album as compensation.

Postmemory theory has been a focal point of this thesis. I have shown that, rather than being applicable to texts as a whole theory, it is possible that certain aspects of the theory apply to certain

texts. It is not a case of the authors 'experiencing' postmemory, and this showing in the texts, but of the authors constructing postmemory *through* the texts. What has been evident throughout this investigation is that perpetrator postmemory is fraught with political difficulties. It is only now, in the third generation, that it is felt appropriate for the descendants of perpetrators to work through the 'trauma' of their family pasts.

\*

While writing up this thesis, initial research in the field of neuroscience has suggested that traumatic events can alter DNA and be passed on through a form of genetic memory. Experts say that this suggestion is important for anxiety research.<sup>1</sup> While neuroscience is not memory studies, and the genetic transfer of memories is not akin to postmemory, this initial research will, if substantiated, deepen our understanding of memory, and perhaps trauma, and its transfer, and could therefore precipitate further illuminating study of post-war German memory.

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<sup>1</sup> James Gallagher, "'Memories' pass between generations', *BBC News*, 1 December 2013  
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-25156510>> [accessed 19 December 2013] (Paragraph 1 of 17)

## Appendix

*The page numbers, where given, correspond to the pages in the original texts.*

### Chapter 1 – Thomas Medicus: *In den Augen meines Großvaters*



Fig. 1.1 – Page 14

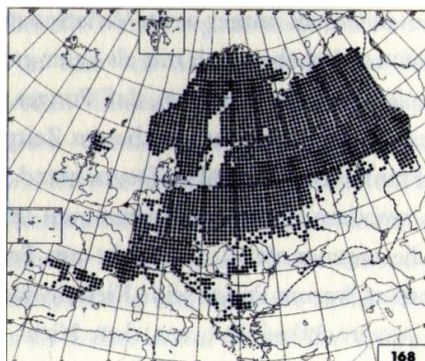


Fig. 1.2 – Page 26



Fig.1.3 – Page 30

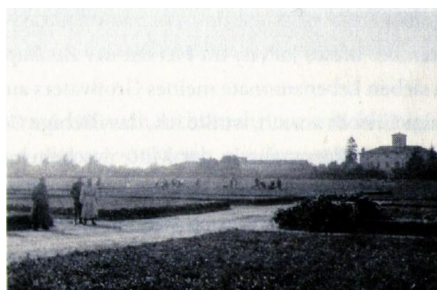


Fig. 1.4 – Page 57



Fig. 1.5 – Page 59



Fig. 1.6 – Page 65



Fig. 1.7 – Page 67

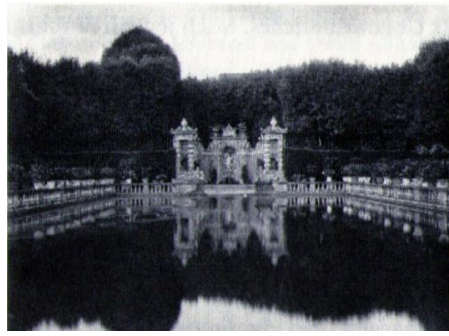


Fig. 1.8 – Page 75

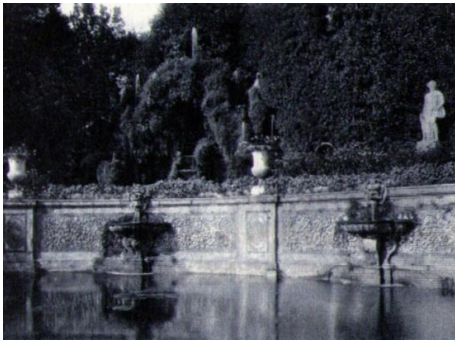


Fig. 1.9 – Page 79

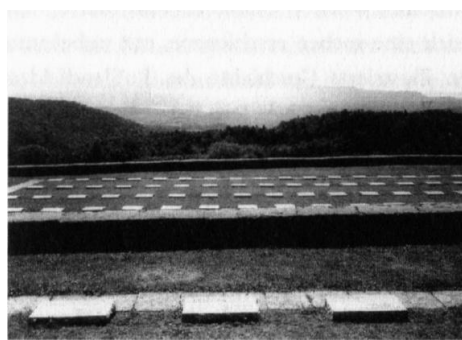


Fig. 1.10 – Page 111



Fig. 1.11 – Page 137



Fig. 1.12 – Page 185

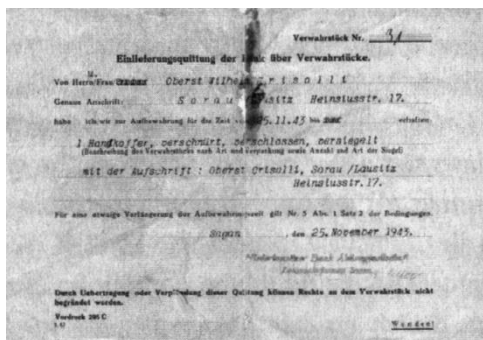


Fig. 1.13 – Page 223



Fig. 1.14 – Page 230



Fig. 1.15 – Page 236



## Chapter 2 – Moritz Pfeiffer: *Mein Großvater im Krieg 1939-1945*



*Großvater Hans Hermann als Angehöriger des Infanterieregiments 80, 1939*

Fig. 2.1 - Page 97



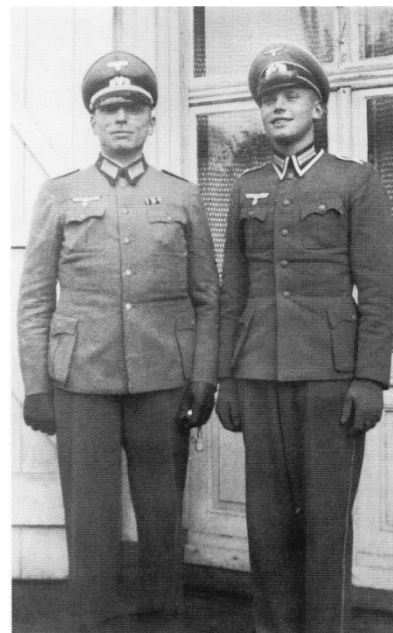
*Urgroßvater Wilhelm (x) im Kreise seiner Kriegskameraden nahe Arras, Nordfrankreich, 1914*

Fig. 2.2 - Page 98



*Das während der Aisneschlacht im August/September viel genannte Rethel mit der unversehrten Kathedrale inmitten zerschossener Straßen und Gebäude, 1914*

Fig. 2.3 - Page 98



*Urgroßvater Wilhelm mit seinem Sohn Hans Hermann, 1940*

Fig. 2.4 - Page 99





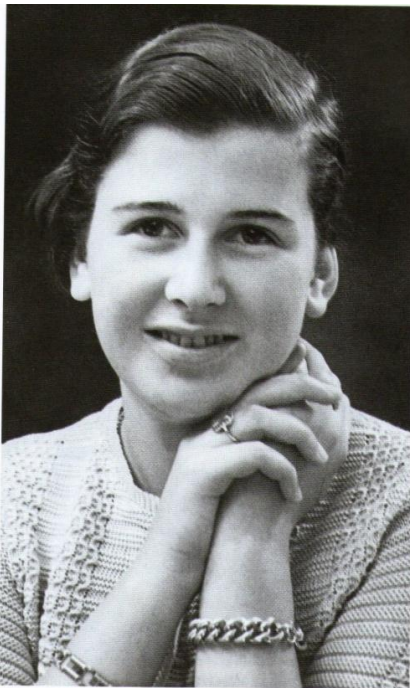
*Großvater Hans-Hermann (links) mit Marlies und Paul-Gerhard, Ende der 1920er Jahre*

Fig. 2.5 - Page 100



*Die Brüder Hans Hermann (rechts) und Siegfried, Mitte der 1930er Jahre*

Fig. 2.6 - Page 100



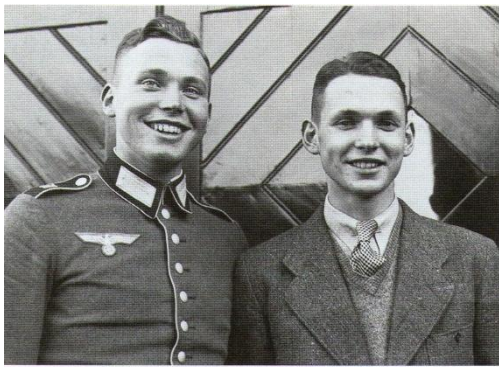
*Großmutter Edith, 1936*

Fig. 2.7 - Page 101



*Großmutter Edith (3. von links) im Kreise von Freundinnen und Freunden während eines Urlaubs auf Wangerooge, Juli 1935*

Fig. 2.8 - Page 102



Die Brüder Hans Hermann und Siegfried, Ende 1939/  
Anfang 1940

Fig. 2.9 – Page 103



Vereidigungsfeier beim Infanterieregiment 80, Ende 1939/  
Anfang 1940

Fig. 2.10 – Page 103



Von der SS einen Tag nach der Kapitulation Warschaus aus-  
gesonderte Juden und andere zur Deportation und Ermordung  
bestimmte Polen, 1939

Fig. 2.11 – Page 104



Alltag der deutschen Okkupation: Verbotsschild in dem in  
„Saybusch“ umbenannten polnischen Landkreis Żywiec, 1941

Fig. 2.12 – Page 104



Auf der Flucht in die Hände deutscher Truppen geratene  
belgische und französische Zivilisten, 1940

Fig. 2.13 – Page 105



„Im Einsatz“ – Foto aus dem Album „Wehrmacht“ von  
Großvater Hans Hermann, ohne Orts- und Jahresangabe

Fig. 2.14 – Page 105





*Vorstoß deutscher Panzer über die Ardennen, Mai 1940*

Fig. 2.15 – Page 106



*Blumen streuende Krankenschwestern und BDM-Mädel in Berlins Straßen anlässlich der Rückkehr Adolf Hitlers nach dem Sieg über Frankreich, 1940*

Fig. 2.16 – Page 106



*Verwüstetes Londoner West End nach einem deutschen Luftangriff, 1940*

Fig. 2.17 – Page 107



*Bergung einer Verletzten nach einem deutschen Luftangriff, 31. Dezember 1940*

Fig. 2.18 – Page 107



*Verleihung des Eisernen Kreuzes beim I.R. 208, 1941*

Fig. 2.19 – Page 108



*Großvater Hans Hermann (3. von rechts) mit den Zugführern der 5. Kompanie, I.R. 208, 1941*

Fig. 2.20 – Page 108





*Eine der zahllosen, von deutschen Truppen niedergebrannten sowjetischen Ortschaften, 1941*

Fig. 2.21 – Page 109



*In der Schlucht Babi Jar nahe Kiew: Ordnungspolizisten bei der Kleiderdurchsuchung ermordeter Juden nach Wertgegenständen – Ende September 1941 erschoss hier das Sondereinsatzkommando 4a der Einsatzgruppe C unter Mithilfe von Truppen der 6. Armee, zu der auch die 79. I.D. meines Großvaters gehörte, 33.771 Juden.*

Fig. 2.22 – Page 109



*Ermordete sowjetische Zivilisten, 1943/44*

Fig. 2.23 – Page 110



*Transport sowjetischer Frauen zur Zwangsarbeit nach Deutschland, 1942/43*

Fig. 2.24 – Page 110



*Hans Hermann als „Adjutant III./208 auf Janka“, etwa Herbst 1941*

Fig. 2.25 – Page 111



*Angehörige der militärischen Einheit von Großvater Hans Hermann. Seine Bildunterschrift: „An diesem Loch wurde ich am 6.9.1942 verwundet, Granatsplitter, Verlust rechtes Auge.“*

Fig. 2.26 – Page 111





*Transport eines verwundeten deutschen Soldaten durch die verwüstete Kriegslandschaft in der Sowjetunion, etwa 1942*

Fig. 2.27 – Page 112



*Großeltern Edith und Hans Hermann im Urlaub, Juni 1942*

Fig. 2.28 – Page 112



*Großeltern (3. und 4. von links) in Wuppertal, Dezember 1942*

Fig. 2.29 – Page 112



*Hochzeit von Edith und Hans Hermann in Metz, 1. Juli 1943*

Fig. 2.30 – Page 113



Fig. 2.31 – Page 114



*Das Möbelgeschäft (oben) von Urgroßvater Wilhelm im Jahre 1932 sowie nach dem alliierten Luftangriff auf Wuppertal, 1943*

Fig. 2.32 – Page 114



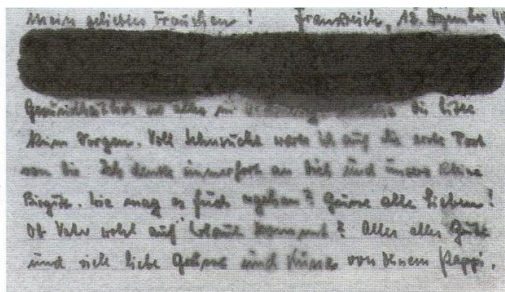
Parade zum „Tag der Wehrmacht“ in Metz mit Großvater Hans Hermann als Adjutant auf dem linken Pferd hinter dem Kommandeur Major Arnold, 1943

Fig. 2.33 – Page 115



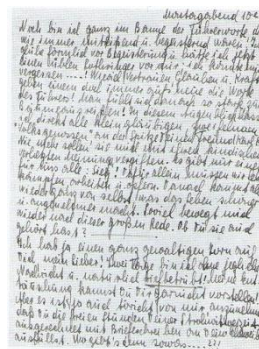
Großmutter Edith im Schwarzwald, November 1943

Fig. 2.34 – Page 115



Brief von Hans Hermann an seine Frau aus der Kriegsgefangenschaft mit von der Zensur geschwärzten und unleserlich gemachten Passagen, Dezember 1944

Fig. 2.35 – Page 115



Brief von Großmutter Edith an ihren Mann, 8. November 1943

Fig. 2.36 – Page 116



Siegfried bei der Büroarbeit, ohne Ort- oder Jahresangabe

Fig. 2.37 – Page 116



Urgroßmutter Kläre mit ihrem Sohn Siegfried in Hohenfichte, Oktober 1943

Fig. 2.38 – Page 116





Bild seiner Tochter, das Großvater Hans Hermann als eines von wenigen Lebenszeichen seiner Ehefrau Edith in der Kriegsgefangenschaft erreichte, 1944

Fig. 2.39 – Page 117

Deutsch schreiben! Druckschrift erwünscht!		Write clearly and in printed letters!	
Vorname—Surname	Hans	Name—First name	Hans
Date of birth	10.3.1921	Place of birth	Wuppertal, Wied
Birth		Birth	
Dienstgrad	Oberleutnant	Militärische Einteilung	Heer
Army No.	3/15. BN 50/28	Last civilian residence	Wuppertal
Beschreibung der Erkennungsmerkmale		Letzter ziviler Wohnort	Wuppertal
Family's address	Frau Edith H. (10) Hohentichte, Coemmitz		
Familienanschrift	Villa Hauschild (Dortm. Land)		
Coming from (Camp No., Hospital No., etc.)			
Kam von (Lager Nr., Lazarett Nr., u.ä. m.)			
Captured:	unwounded	slightly wounded	severely wounded
In Gefangenschaft geraten:	nicht verwundet	leicht verwundet	schwer verwundet
Am w./	Am: recovered	convalescing	
Befinde mich wohl	Bef: geheilt	in Heilung	
Present address:	P.O. No.	Camp No.	
Gegenwärtige Anschrift:	Gefangenen Nr.	Lager Nr.	
Ort	Datum	Unterschrift	
	26. 11. 44		

Gefangenennmeldung meines Großvaters an seine Frau, 26. November 1944

Fig. 2.40 – Page 117



Beginn einer sowjetischen Gegenoffensive, 1943

Fig. 2.41 – Page 118



Propaganda gegen Kriegsmüdigkeit und Bolschewismus, 1944/45

Fig. 2.42 – Page 118



Plakat gegen die Verbreitung von „Gerüchten“, etwa 1944

Fig. 2.43 – Page 119



Parole zum Durchhalten, 1945

Fig. 2.44 – Page 119



*Edith und Hans Hermann mit ihren beiden Töchtern, 1947*

Fig. 2.45 – Page 120



*Großeltern Ende der 1990er Jahre*

Fig. 2.46 – Page 120



### Chapter 3 – Stephan Wackwitz: *Ein unsichtbares Land*



Fig. 3.1 – Page 9



Fig. 3.2 – Page 11

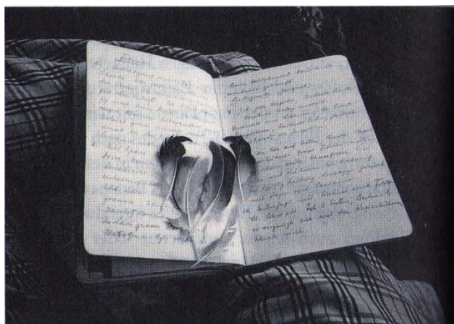


Fig. 3.3 – Page 82



Fig. 3.4 – Page 115



Fig. 3.5 – Page 126



Fig. 3.6 – Page 132

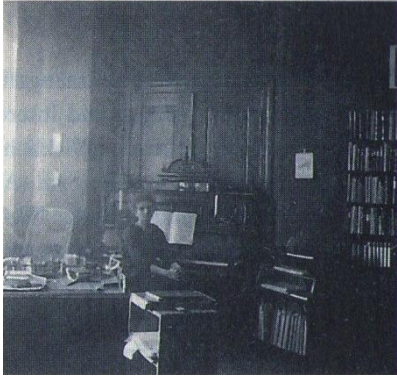


Fig. 3.7 – Page 137



Fig. 3.8 – Page 139



Fig. 3.9 – Page 218



Fig. 3.10 – Page 225

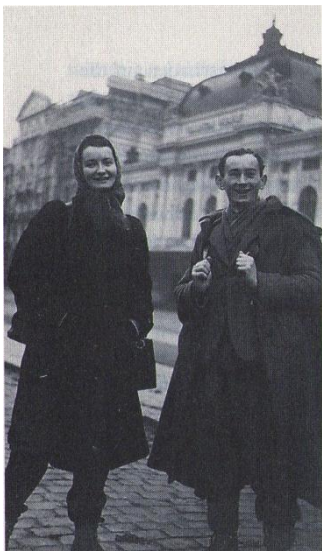


Fig. 3.11 – Page 228



Fig. 3.12 – Page 229



## Chapter 4 – Alexandra Senfft: *Schweigen tut weh*



1 Anne Erika Nora Ludin, ca. 1946

Fig. 4.1



2 Erla und Hanns Ludin mit Erika, 1934

Fig. 4.2



3 Fritz Ludin mit Enkeltöchtern (Erika links), 1938

Fig. 4.3



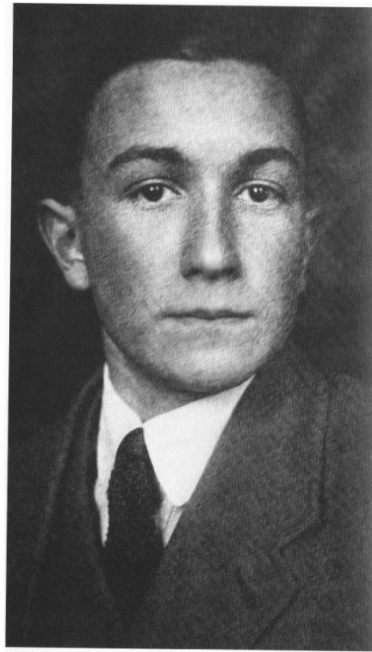
4 Erla Ludin mit vier Kindern (Erika rechts), 1939

Fig. 4.4



5 Ehepaar Ludin mit Kindern (Erika links unten), 1940

Fig. 4.5



6 Hanns Elard Ludin als Abiturient, 1924

Fig. 4.6



7 Erika links, 1937

Fig. 4.7



8 Erika in der Hohen Tatra/  
Slowakei, 1943

Fig. 4.8



9 Erika, ca. 1939

Fig. 4.9



10 Erika in der Slowakei, 1944

Fig. 4.10



11 Erla Ludin, 1941

Fig. 4.11



12 Hanns Ludin, ca. 1940

Fig. 4.12



13 Erla Ludin mit Erika, 1941

Fig. 4.13



14 Erla mit ihren sechs Kindern (Erika links oben) in Tübingen, ca. 1957, Foto: Erika Ludin

Fig. 4.14



15 Erla mit ihren sechs Kindern (Erika rechts unten) und Großmutter Johanna, ca. 1956, Foto: Erika Ludin

Fig. 4.15



16 Erla, ca. 1959, Foto: Erika Ludin

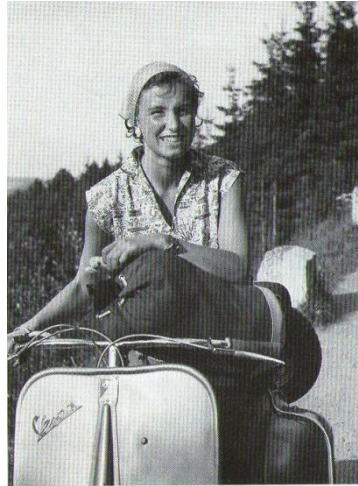
Fig. 4.16





17 Erika, Selbstporträt, Stuttgart, ca. 1959

Fig. 4.17



18 Erika in Jugoslawien, 1954

Fig. 4.18



19 Erika in Norderney, ca. 1955

Fig. 4.19



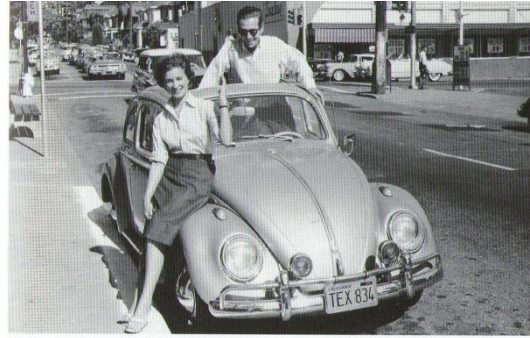
20 Erika in Stuttgart, ca. 1957

Fig. 4.20



21 Erika, ca. 1957

Fig. 4.21



22 Erika mit Heinrich Senfft, Berkeley/USA, 1960

Fig. 4.22



23 Erika mit Mann und Alexandra, 1962

Fig. 4.23



24 Erika mit Alexandra und dem Schriftsteller Friedrich Sieburg, Gärtringen, 1962

Fig. 4.24



25 Erika mit Alexandra und Sohn Johann Heinrich in Gärtringen, ca. 1966

Fig. 4.25



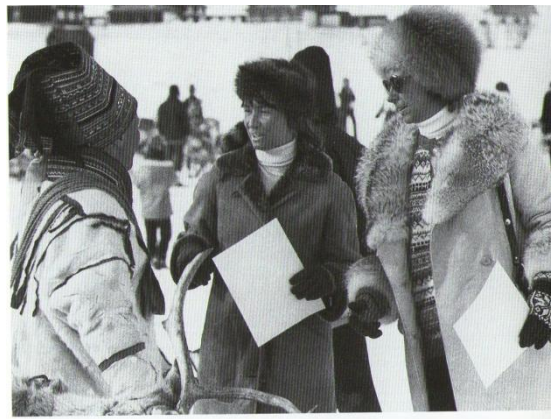
26 Erika mit Alexandra, Fano/Dänemark, ca. 1967

Fig. 4.26



27 Erika mit Mann und Alexandra auf dem Weg zur Hochzeit einer Schwester, 1965

Fig. 4.27



28 Erika mit Rut Brandt in Lapland/Norwegen, 1971

Fig. 4.28



29 Erika in Kairo/Ägypten, 1976

Fig. 4.29



30 Erika in Hamburg, 1976, Foto: Richard Stradtman

Fig. 4.30





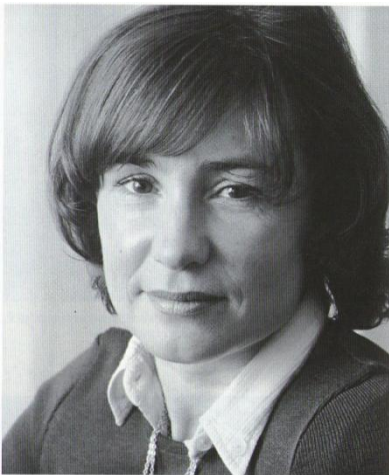
31 Erla und Erika mit der Tochter der Autorin, 1994

Fig. 4.31



32 Erla mit der Autorin, 1996

Fig. 4.32



33 Erika, 1976, Foto: Richard Stradtman

Fig. 4.33



Fig. 4.34

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